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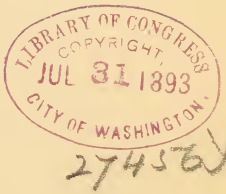
WHY WE EXPECT JESUS NOW

By JOHN MASON



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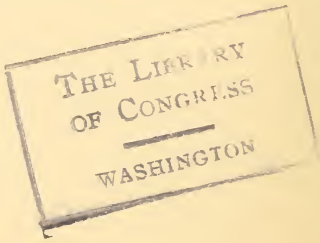

WHY WE EXPECT JESUS NOW.

THERE is a sweetly solemn joy in the thought that in all probability, as concerns the great majority of those of the Church who shall read these pages, the eyes that read will be eyes that shall behold the appearing of that Blessed One for whom we watch and wait — our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It has been refreshment by the way to read His promises of coming again, and we have found comfort in praying for the hastening of the time, and our spirits have already risen Heavenward as we sang together of His return — but at last to see His face, that will be joy inexpressible. "When the desire cometh, it is a tree of life." Yet, as we stand in faith before the opening gates of Paradise, restored with all the bountifulness of Him who gave Himself — the Heavenly given back for the earthly, the many homes in the Father's house for that one garden, the very life of God for that which was kept from the tree of life lest it should continue forever — as we stand thus, about to behold Him who is our Lord, as well as our Hope and Desire, and think of our often disobedience and much unprofitableness, the old cry well-nigh comes to our lips, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Happy are we that it

is ours instead to utter that later cry, by which the Bride is known by the heavenly Bridegroom, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Before giving reasons for our present expectation of the Lord Jesus, I think it well to give a short statement of what is now generally accepted by the Church as the teaching of Scripture concerning what is commonly called, the Second Coming. Do I also need to define the Church? Can I mean anything else than all those, and only those, who, having been born anew by the Holy Spirit, are by that indwelling Holy Spirit united to Him who is "head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all"?

About the same number of years before Christ that we are after, that is, about the year 1900 B. C., God tested the faith of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, and gave him this promise: "By Myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice." And so Abraham became "the father of all them that believe," whether they be the children of Law or of Grace.

The fulfillment of this promise (looking yet to a fulfillment in fullness beyond all powers of description), has been in that harmony with the similitudes employed which characterizes everything Divine.

First, "as the sand which is upon the sea shore" — an earthly people, a nation with defined limits and unvarying characteristics, whose blessings were earthly, children by natural descent, whose mountain is Sinai — the Jew. This second figure was fulfilled first, but will be last again, according to God's order, in its chief fulfillment, in the day when King Jesus shall sit on the throne of David, "and men shall be blessed in Him ; all nations shall call Him happy." "They shall bless Him all the day long." (See Psalm 72.)

Second, "as the stars of the heaven"— a spiritual people, gathered out of "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," as varied as the stars, blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," children born of the Spirit — the Church, whose hill is Calvary, as dead to the world, and whose mountain is Olivet, as one with Him who thence ascended in resurrection life and thither comes again.

And so, from Abraham onward, for about 1900 years the lamp of testimony was committed to an earthly people, under a Dispensation of Law. That Dispensation ended in utter failure. Calvary saw the extinction of all national testimony. Again, for nearly 1900 years, has testimony been committed, under a Dispensation of Grace, to a

spiritual people, whose seven lamp-stands, bearing the light of the Holy Spirit, have in their midst Jesus, and whose angels are the seven stars in His right hand.

It being evident that the Lord Jesus Christ has promised, both to the Church and to the Jew, that He will come again, we may well conclude, even if Scriptural proof was wanting, and just because of the unvarying appropriateness and harmony of all God's workings — that the coming of the Lord for the Church would be of so different a complexion from His return to the Jews as to be a contrast. It must be as diverse as Law is from Grace, as the earthly is from the heavenly, and as kingly rule is from such closeness of relationship as of "the head" to "the body." The character of the coming can never be the same to subjects as to associates, for we are represented as sitting with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places, companions of His present rejection. All this is equivalent to saying that the event cannot be one and the same to both the Church and the Jew. Attempts to blend the two phases of the coming, like all other attempted blendings of the matters of the two dispensations, have produced in our religious literature and teachings, a thick fog where there should have been a clear sky, and distortions where there should have been the very beauty of Heaven.

Scripture is very clear as to: 1. A manifestation to the Church, a coming of the Lord to the air only, to receive the Church to Himself. 2. A

coming to the Jews, to the earth, to reign in Jerusalem as their King. Before considering the first aspect, with which we are in the succeeding pages chiefly concerned, let us look briefly at the second, which will follow, after some short interval. "The Jew first," was God's order. "I was not sent," says our Lord, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the first became last, of which reversal of order Simeon prophesied : "A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

THE COMING TO THE JEW.

Probably the concluding words of our Lord's public ministry were these : "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem — killing the prophets and stoning them that are sent to her ! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a bird gathers her own young ones under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is abandoned to you ! For I say to you, You shall not see Me henceforth till you shall say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." After His resurrection the Lord Jesus was not seen except by His own followers, and to this day there is a blindness of heart upon the Jews, so that they see not the Glory of Israel. And just as, long ago, they tried to enter the promised land without the Lord, and were smitten before their enemies, so to-day many of the Jews are attempting to return to their abandoned house without Him who alone can, with His overshadowing wings,

make it once more a home for His birds. There comes to the Jew that terrible season of persecution and affliction, prophesied of as "the time of Jacob's trouble," and of which they have already had an earnest. Russia is clearly shown as the chief persecuting power, the Prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, of Ezekiel 38 and 39 (R. V.), being recognized by expositors as equivalent to Emperor of all the Russias, *i. e.*, Russia, Moscow (Muscovy) and Tobolsk (Siberia). Even now before our eyes God is preparing His answer to Paul's question, "Did God cast off His people? God forbid." "He that scattered Israel will gather him." We see but movements as yet, telling us that the Day of the Lord draws nigh, spoken of always in Scripture as a time of terror, when God will break His long silence, and His judgments will be in the earth; and when His ancient people will be gathered, as a flock gathers together in a storm.

"I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." Joel. 2 : 30, 31.

"But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire." Mal. 3 : 2.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens above, and to the earth, that He may

judge His people : Gather My saints together unto Me ; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness ; for God is judge Himself." Psalm 50 : 3–6.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication ; and they shall look unto Me whom they have pierced : and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Zech. 12 : 9, 10.

"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east . . . and the Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with Thee. . . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth." Zech. 14 : 3, 4, 5, 9.

Standing upon this same Mount of Olives, the disciples gaze steadfastly into Heaven after the ascending Jesus, as the cloud receives Him out of their sight, and two angels stand beside them and say, "This Jesus, who is received up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you beheld Him going into Heaven." These disciples had asked Jesus a little before, "Lord, dost Thou

at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" and He had replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father has set within His own authority. But you shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth." And when the witnessing is completed and the mission of the Spirit is accomplished, then shall God again reckon earth's time from Jerusalem, and there shall be fulfilled that which was spoken by the angel Gabriel concerning the Lord Jesus: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

"Behold, He cometh with the clouds! and every eye shall see Him, and they who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him. Even so, Amen."

THE COMING FOR THE CHURCH.

To him who can receive the truth, unbiased by preconceived theories, it must be evident how utterly diverse from the foregoing, as regards character and locality, is the New Testament description of our Lord's coming for His Church — gathering to Himself the harvest of Grace, ere the judgment-storm breaks, of the "great and very terrible" Day of the Lord. How different, con-

sequently, is the attitude of mind enjoined upon us, whose privilege it is to wait and watch.

"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many homes. If it were not so, I would have told you: for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you to Myself; so that where I am, you may be also." John 14:1–4.

"I will not leave you orphans: I come to you." John 14:18.

"You turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven." 1 Thess. 1:9, 10. This epistle, from which also the next quotation is taken, was written about the year 52, and is the oldest of the New Testament writings, unless perhaps, the gospel by Matthew.

"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that you sorrow not even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those also who are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those who are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive, who are left, shall

together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess. 4 : 13–18.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery : We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Cor. 15 : 51, 52.

"Our citizenship is in Heaven : from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things to Himself." Phil. 3 : 20, 21.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also with Him be manifested in glory." Col. 3 : 4.

"We should live . . . looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2 : 12, 13.

"Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation." Hebrews 9 : 28.

"You, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein you greatly rejoice." 1 Peter 1 : 5, 6.

"Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1 : 13.

"When the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, you shall receive the crown of glory that fades not away." 1 Peter 5 : 4.

"And now, little children, abide in Him ; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." 1 John 2 : 28.

"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one who has this hope set on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3 : 2, 3.

"Hold fast till I come." Rev. 2 : 25.

"I come quickly ; hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." Rev. 3 : 11.

"Yea : I come quickly. Amen : come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22 : 20.

These passages speak not of the omnipotent King of kings driving His enemies before Him as the dust flies before the tempest, but of the tender Saviour, gathering to Himself the children of the travail of His soul, and turning Grace into Glory. It is no Day of Fear, but the Day of Love. There is no fear in Love, neither can any dwell in her abiding-place, "prepared" through these past centuries by Love's wounded hands and now revealed

— Home. When "all those who have loved His appearing" shall be caught up to meet in the air the King of their hearts, what a strange literalness there will be in this phase of the ever-widening fulfillment of that prophecy made under the shadow of the cross: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself."

THE WORLD'S COMING SUBJECT OF INTEREST.

We understand the interest of the Church. 318 times is this great truth of the Second Coming mentioned in the New Testament, which thus gives it a greater prominence than any other truth. In the epistles it is referred to 67 times, and the atonement only 57 times. For the love that took our place and died, is dearer still as the love that comes again. And if this truth had such a hold on the heart and mind of the Church of the first century, how should it possess us who already hear the music of our Lord's footsteps!

But to the world also, interested as it is in a multitude of subjects, chiefly concerning its captivity to self and to the devil, there is by comparison only this one subject, towering above all others in awful interest, such as might be felt by those who, living carelessly on the slopes of a burning mountain, which had been quiet for centuries, should behold a column of smoke arising. Only a cloud; but to-morrow the mountain will quake, and there will be flame and burning destruction. Present interest is alone safe, for thus there is a chance of escape.

It will not be wise for the world to wait for the day when very terror will make men with crowns on their heads, and others holding what the world calls "high official positions," "hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" A change, truly, that will be from the day when the crowned head mocked the Lamb of God, silent before His shearers, and when the high official consigned Him to the cross.

The world may well tremble. It will be conceded by all, that the Church exerts a restraining power against the universal supremacy of evil. And this restraining power proceeds from the Holy Spirit, dwelling within every individual member. When the Church is gone, what then is left in the way of restraint? Not the Holy Spirit, for He, as a special presence on the earth, is inseparable from the Church. He who indwells cannot be separated from those whom He indwells. He by whom every member of the mystic Body of Christ was formed and is bound together, must be and is to be, according to our Lord's promise, an abiding presence "for ever." And even as He came to the Church at Pentecost, descending from Heaven, with a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and resting upon each one as with tongues of fire — so, when

the Spirit shall again, as before the Flood, cease to strive with the world, the Church will be carried with Him in His Heavenward return, translated like Elijah, on the whirlwind and with the fiery glory, to meet her Lord in the air, and to be for ever with Him. Thus, when the Spirit has spoken His last to the Churches, even to Laodicea, and we see in verse 5 of the next chapter (the 4th of the Revelation), the "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God," it is equivalent to saying that the seven lamp-stands of the Church are also before the throne. For the Church, like John, who in the Spirit tarried till the Lord came, has seen the "door opened in Heaven," and has heard the trumpet-call, "Come up hither!" and has been caught up in the Spirit to the sheltered standpoint of glory. I say not "safer" standpoint, for Grace is as safe as Glory; but the Lord always gathers out His own ere He begins His judgment work. And from the glory standpoint, the Church beholds what "must come to pass hereafter"—open judgments on the world; the keynote of transition from the reign of Grace, now over, being given in verse 5 — "lightnings and voices and thunders." The first two verses of this 4th chapter, which immediately succeed the last word to the last of the churches, are thus a picture of the rapture of the Church.

We are therefore shut up to the conclusion that when the Church is taken away, there will be upon

earth no restraint from wickedness. God will never leave Himself without a witness, but it will be as the witness of a voice crying in a moral wilderness. Restraint will be gone as much as in the days before the flood, when men gave themselves up to self-gratification — "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." What can it mean when the salt of the earth is removed, with the Spirit who gives it savor, but swift corruption, both in the ecclesiastical world, and in the world void of all forms of religion? What can it mean, when the flood-gates are opened, but a mad rush of lawlessness — a shooting of Niagara. "The mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one who restrains now, until He be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2 : 7–10. "Know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than

lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." 2 Tim. 3 : 1–5. And all this without restraint. The faithful witness will have gone, that pleaded with the lover of self ; the voice of conscience will be silent, that once hampered the lover of money ; and those buildings that are called "churches," rid of their every troublesome "member," will become a Babylonish "habitation of devils, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird." Already are many of these churches lower sunk than the Temple in the last days of national Jewish religiousness. That had become a house of merchandise, where sheep, oxen, and doves were sold. In these, for so much, they sell you the right to worship God on a certain spot ; at their so-called altars, woman sells herself to man, in the bargain of modern marriage ; and the church fair far outrivals the Jewish "den of thieves."

I know not if there were newspapers and magazines in the days before the flood. Probably there was a far higher civilization than is generally believed. If there were newspapers, we can well believe that they would be filled with much the same matter as they are to-day — violence, greed, knavery, and folly, with scarcely a word that would remind the reader that he is in the midst of Christendom : 3 columns to a prize fight, and 3 lines to a missionary meeting. And the magazines would be filled with able scientific articles, proving conclusively the continuity of all things, and the in-

herent ability of mankind to go on to perfection. Highly amusing articles might sometimes appear on Noah and his ark, headed, "Cranks," or, "The man that knows more than we do." But "they knew not," our Lord says — "they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man." It will again be the unexpected that will overtake the world. If its wise ones are questioned, they will give it as their sagacious opinion, that after many thousands of years there might be some crisis or catastrophe, "but it won't be in your lifetime or mine." The wish is father to the thought with the unprepared, specially with those who have "much goods laid up for many years," and who have just been saying to their souls, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." But when God's "this night" may darken down at any moment, — not the night of one poor fool, but the night of a world of them, — would it not be wisdom in our newspapers to devote at least as much attention to the Coming of the Lord as they do to the coming races, or the coming harvest, or the coming elections? And our magazine writers might draw attention to the fact that the recurrence of the unexpected is in strict accord with scientific principles and everyday experience.

Paul pictures the whole creation as deeply concerned for the coming of the time when the Lord shall return and the Church with Him. "The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation

was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." Rom. 8 : 19–22. The slime of the serpent is over the fairest flowers ; "there is sorrow on the sea ; it cannot be quiet ;" and the land is burdened with the defilements of sin, whose penalty has made it and the sea one great grave.

Beneath the insane pleasures of the world, and its cravings for opiates, stimulants, position, and fame — lies the radical misery of the human heart. It needs God. And that man brings the best news to its darkness, sickness, and wretchedness, who tells the world that the dawn is nearing when the Sun of Righteousness shall "arise with healing in His wings," even though there be a darkest hour before that dawn. For beyond that blackness of war, famine, and pestilence, is the Millennial glory, when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them." "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

And he brings the sweetest news to the Church who tells her: "Behold, the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet Him." For love ever desires presence, and the heart that loves the Lord, prays without ceasing that last prayer in the sacred volume, these concluding words of inspiration that suggestively pass into the final benediction, whose full glory of meaning will be seen when Jesus comes with outstretched arms to receive His own: "Amen: Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen."

With the best of all, do we begin the reasons for our present expectation:

THE LORD'S OWN PROMISE.

Just before that "Amen: Come, Lord Jesus," our Lord said, "Yea: I come quickly." But He has not come quickly, according to man's reckoning. Since these words were uttered, God has kept silence for 1800 years — His longest silence since the Creation. Some might say, in explanation, that the Church, being a Heavenly body, and having, according to Scripture, "the mind of Christ," and reckoned as a partner with Him in all things, must consider time only from the Heavenly standpoint — a thousand years being in the sight of the Lord of Heaven "but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." To us in childhood one year seems a lifetime; but in middle age we look back from one Christmas to the last, as if it were but yesterday. And after all, what a short

time it is since our Lord walked in and out among us. I have talked with a relative who could tell me what his father told him concerning the rebellion in 1745 against the present English dynasty — thus bridging over about 150 years. Eleven more of such periods would bring us to the apostle John in his old age, to the very time, about the year 96, when that disciple whom Jesus loved heard these words from our Lord's lips: "Yea: I come quickly."

About the year 68, Peter, in his second epistle, looks forward to "the last days," when the question will be put, "Where is the promise of His coming?" and finds it necessary, even at that early date, to give a word of caution to believers: "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness." Thus, our Lord did not give His promise till long after this caution had been dictated by the Holy Spirit, so that the Church might read His "I come quickly" in the light of the caution.

Yet we can well believe that it was in the heart of the Lord Jesus to have come "quickly" according to the language of men, and not to have tarried for 1800 years. But the Church made it impossible. The promised return and heavenly rest were before her just as much as the promised land and earthly rest were before the Church in the wilderness; and we can believe that it was the

mind of the Lord that the primitive Church should enter into possession, just as it was His mind, about 3380 years ago, to have fulfilled His promise by taking His people straight from Egypt to the land flowing with milk and honey. But Canaan became undesirable in the eyes of Israel, through their false ideas both of the land and of their Saviour God, and in their hearts they turned back to Egypt. "They were not able to enter in because of unbelief." So it is written in Psalm 81 :

> "I am the Lord thy God,
> Which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt :
> Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
> But My people hearkened not to My voice;
> And Israel would none of Me."

Therefore for forty years it was the punishment of the Church in the wilderness to have withheld from her the fulfillment of the promise, even till all that unbelieving generation saw death. There is a passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, in which the guilt of an offender under Law and an offender under Grace is contrasted, and it is asked concerning the latter, "Of how much sorer punishment shall he be judged worthy?" When we consider who it is who comes again ; the surpassing privileges, beauty, and joy of that return for us : and that our promised land is not so many square miles of earth, but an inheritance in Heaven, even the Heaven of Heavens, the very arms of God — for Jesus says, "I will receive you unto Myself :" would forty times forty years of wandering out of

all sight and expectation of the promise, not be a light punishment ?

The death of the apostle John about the year 100, had no doubt a depressing effect on the faith of the faithful few who, amid rapidly increasing departure from the truth, still looked for the Lord's return. For it is evident that there was an expectation that He would come before John died ; and the apostle seeks to qualify that expectation in the last chapter of his gospel, which seems like an appendix thereto, and was probably written very shortly before his death. "Peter therefore seeing [John] says to Jesus, 'Lord, and what shall this man do ?' Jesus says to him, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? Follow thou Me.' This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die. Yet Jesus said not to him that he should not die ; but, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ?'"

About the year 324, the Cross was displayed on the banners of the Roman emperor, Constantine, announcing the alliance of professed Christianity with the State. This meant the demoralization and ruin of Christianity ; for history records then that open adulterous union of profession with the world, which has continued ever since under the name of Christendom. But long before Constantine's time, this leaven of wickedness was working, as we see from James 4 : 4 : "Ye adulteresses [Ye who break your marriage vow to God], know

ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Whatever hope and desire for the Lord's return may have lingered till the days of Constantine, must then have been practically extinguished. A Christianity on good terms with the world could have no desire, but the very reverse; and what had been to the early believers a "blessed Hope," became an awesome Fear. And so things have continued till recent years.

We conclude, therefore, that it has been impossible for the Lord to have come quickly, because of the unbelief and want of desire of His professed people. What bridegroom would come for a bride so careless or unbelieving that she had lost sight of the very fact that he was coming for her; or, if remembering, interpreting the bridegroom's return as meaning death, and so looking upon it with fear and trembling: which perversion of scripture is testified to by our religious literature, by our hymns, and by the memories of most of us. What wonder that "the Bridegroom tarried," and that the bones of an unbelieving generation have strewn this wilderness of their wanderings of heart.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a bird gathers her own young ones under her wings, and *ye would not.*" Now the "gathering together" of the Church, spoken of in 2 Thess. 2:1, is the same Greek as the above gathering together: "We beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto

Him." Surely the Lord's heart is specially warm to the Church, which is his body, to whom He gave the promise, "I will not leave you orphans: I come to you." Is it then only of Jerusalem that it has been true, "How often would I have gathered you together," and that the Lord has been compelled to add, "And you would not"?

The wise, as well as the foolish virgins, have been sleeping as regards the coming of the Bridegroom — sleeping for at least 1600 years. "But at midnight there is a cry." It seems as if the Lord, in despair of His Church, has himself aroused her by the Holy Spirit. The cry has of recent years gone forth in power over all the world, and there has been a general awakening of the Church to honest heart-desire for her Lord's return, and a proper conception of it as a home gathering. The once prevalent idea that the Lord's coming meant death, was appropriate to a theology which had resolved His blessed personality into a misty abstraction. But now the Church looks for that same Jesus of whose warm personality the disciple whom Jesus loved could speak; He who loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; and of whom Paul could say, He "loved me, and gave Himself up for me."

Many give the following passage (Matt. 24:14) as a reason why we should not expect the Lord immediately: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come."

But, speaking generally, the gospel has certainly now been preached in all the world in the shape of a testimony to all the nations — with no resemblance to exhaustiveness as regards these nations, for that is not contemplated in the passage, which in any case brings the Coming we look for very near, seeing that it must be before "the end." This prophecy is rather one of the most powerful arguments for the impossibility of further delay. After the Church is taken away, and the time of the great tribulation is entered upon, the testimony will be carried on till the end with all the energy of deep repentance and alarm, proclaiming a coming King. With such a completion of testimony to follow, there stands not to-day a single word of testimony between us and the coming of the Lord.

If we can only say, and I think we can, that the Church is not now hindering her Lord's return, what reason as strong can we have for believing in His immediate appearing as just His own simple words: "Yea: I come quickly."

When the forty years wandering of Israel was at an end, there was a sudden movement. The cry went forth through all the camp: "Within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land." And after the Church's forty times forty years of wandering of heart, the midnight cry is now over all the camp of the saints throughout the world, and it is as if we heard repeated from the very lips of the Lord Jesus the word, "Quickly."

THE CHURCH DESIRES HER LORD'S RETURN.

We may go further than saying that the Church is not now hindering: we may say that she has a spirit of desire after the Lord's appearing such as has not been since Pentecostal times. A remarkable change has come over the Church within the last few years, caused entirely by the Holy Spirit shedding light upon what was dark, revealing the beauty of the coming One, and so drawing out all hearts to Him. We are told (2 Peter 1:19) that we do well to take heed to "the word of prophecy made more sure," "as unto a lamp shining in a dark [*Greek*, squalid] place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in [our] hearts:" that is, till the time of our Morning Star, whom we shall rise to meet. Meantime, the Church is traveling through a place that is not only dark, because it is night, but squalid, foul with neglect; and this lamp of prophecy is to throw light upon her path till the dawn—not clearly upon more of the path than just about where we stand: for God does not give clear light on any special point till it is needed.

About the time that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, there was, among His own people, the Jews, a general expectation of His coming, derived from prophecy, but a light that suffered aberration by passing through the dense medium of their proud, darkened, and unspiritual hearts. Thus they made the great mistake of supposing that the advent

would be of an earthly king to restore the glories of Solomon's reign — a mountain of exaltation without any valley of humiliation. But the first stage of that coming was as follows (and let the spiritual behold therein a picture) — a Child to be taken to our hearts and have therein his throne ; a Babe born by the power of the Holy Spirit, as must be all who enter His Kingdom ; an outsider, as are all His subjects till He comes to reign — no room in the inn, persecuted by the world, an exile in Egypt, and for thirty years invisible and unknown to professing Judaism, a period of which nothing is known but that it was spent with His own flesh and blood, in which we may see some figure of the Church, whose "life is hid with Christ in God." Jewish profession understood not, but the Church of that day did — such as Simeon, who took the Babe to his heart, and Anna, and the shepherds, and the Gentile wise men, and Mary, who kept the words of God in her heart. To-day the Church understands that a more gladsome sight is dawning than the first Christmas saw. To the wise there may be as the light of a guiding star, and to the simple there may be as the glory of the Lord shining round about them ; but to Gentile and Jew, and high and low, it is the revealing light of the Holy Spirit, showing a coming of a thoroughly home character, a gathering together of all who love the appearing of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Thereafter is the Church invisible for a time, to re-appear with her Lord

in glory, in His public advent as King of the Jews.

I know no part of the world where the Bible has been better studied than in Scotland, and yet there are still living in that country, pastors who, in their early ministry, stood isolated on this question from all their fellows, and were looked upon by Christians generally as fanatics and visionaries simply because they believed that the Lord's coming for the Church did not mean death, nor an event for which she had to wait till the end of a thousand years. Scotland sees now that these few men had but reached sooner than others the summit of Mount Pisgah, and therefore saw all the earlier, through the revelation of the Spirit, what God has prepared for those who love Him. To-day the Church throughout the world is with them — almost entirely as regards belief in the nearness of the Coming, and entirely as regards desire for Him who is the Coming One. To any Christian who reads and observes, there is no need of facts in proof that everywhere, even in Jerusalem, the Church is being wakened up to watching and waiting, and is smiling with happiness at the revival of the Blessed Hope.

The question is often put — Will not some only of the Church be taken, and some left? It is want of discernment between mere profession and reality that prompts such a question. As to the Church, every member will be taken when the Lord comes, and just because they are of the

Church ; and none but members of the Church will be taken. How is it possible that any part should be left behind of the mystic Body of the Lord, every member of which is knit together in love with the great Head and with every other member ? For, in connection with the coming of the Lord for the Church there are but two classes in these days of grace — Lovers, having the love of God shed abroad in their hearts through the Holy Spirit ; and Non-lovers, of whom it is written, "If any man loves not the Lord, let him be anathema. Our Lord comes." 1 Cor. 16 : 22, R. V. It is not a question of degree of love, but of the existence of love. Shame be on us if so transcendent a joy as seeing the Lord and being forever with Him, has not become the chief thought and desire of our lives, by which everything therein is regulated, and by which all outward affairs are estimated.

But if, to-day, in some measure of love, we can say, "Amen : come, Lord Jesus," in response to His promise, "Yea : I come quickly," then does there seem to be fulfilled that attitude of heart that the Lord has linked to His promise. "Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation." Seeing that the Church for perhaps 1700 years had ceased to wait for the Lord, this promise could not be fulfilled. But now that all over the world we are waiting and watching for Him, with both our

hearts and our eyes, faith claims the fulfillment. For the Church holds in her hands the key of the Coming. "If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him." And if the Church is now opening to the Lord, He will come.

THE GETTING READY OF THE CHURCH.

When a party of emigrants is leaving for a foreign land, there is much personal preparation, much cultivating of friendship among those who are to be future companions, and a general settling up of affairs — a severing of ties that will have henceforth no place, and parting messages to those left behind. Since every member of the Church must be ready when the Lord comes — not in any perfection of readiness, but certainly in the spirit and heart-attitude of readiness — then all these things are even now being worked by the Holy Spirit in every member.

As regards the personal aspect of the getting ready, it is beyond question that the matter of personal holiness has within the last few years commanded the practical attention of the whole Church. To live as realizing the absolute proprietorship of the Redeemer in our spirits, souls, and bodies, which lies at the foundation of all questions of holiness and consecration, is now seen to be no "higher life," which some may practice and the many may neglect, but that every-day life which should have followed the conversion of every one of us, as a matter of course, had we received our

Lord and Saviour with the simplicity of little children. There is to-day a growing apprehension of what is in keeping with the spirits, souls, and bodies of those who are not their own but have been bought with a price, and who, having been born anew are partakers of the Divine nature; and there is some growing realization of conformity to the Divine ideal. It is also realized that religion is no matter of creeds and opinions received from sectarian connections, but is a matter of the heart; and that the heart that is most prepared for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the heart that loves Him most.

In the next place, I think that we of the Family are all becoming better acquainted, and are having more and more of that pleasant assurance spoken of by the disciple whom Jesus loved: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." There is a gathering going on before our eyes of God's spiritual Israel — a gathering together in heart and soul such as has not been since those happy first days when the Church was "of one heart and soul." The Power that is drawing us together is that by which we shall be caught up together; and it seems to me that the Holy Spirit is working thus, because the Coming is at hand, and He would not have us ashamed then before the Lord and before one another. We now meet each other in ever-multiplying conferences and meetings of many kinds, but why so little at that meeting which is above all, that family circle,

that gathering place of the Church — the Lord's Table? How has Sectarianism (that is, combined Devil, world, and flesh) dimmed the glory of beauty of that sacred feast! What a rallying point it might have been for the faithful, what a joy for the lonely, what a declaration of present and eternal union. It is a "might have been" that we will be sorry about up yonder, when we look back on sectarian walls that we allowed to keep us from sitting together at that memorial of dying love that was only until He came. The Passover gathered the Jews together as one. The Lord's Supper scatters Christendom. Should it scatter the Church? What, then, have we to do with these many sectarian tables: as if we met round a table, and not round the Lord of the table? We are improving in this matter, but are still tied by tradition and hampered by sectarianism, and have yet to come out into the full liberty of the truth with which Christ has made us free. We all profess in theory that we are free from the Devil's yokes of bondage; that the Lord's Table is one, even as He is one; that it is our gathering place, and ours only; and that all contrary ideas and practices are not of God but of the Devil — and yet !!! With all my heart do I plead for a more abundant practicing of what we believe. If the question was put to you, reader, Where would you have the Lord find you when he comes? could you give a better answer than, Just at his table, with my brothers and sisters: for it would be the place of obedience, remembrance, love, unity, and testimony — all in one.

As regards the other preparations for departure, it may truthfully be said that never since Pentecost has the Church so realized her pilgrim character, and that she is not of the world any more than her Lord was of the world, nor in the place of acceptance with the world any more than He was. We recognize that God is gathering into one the hearts of His spiritual Israel, dispersed among the sects, just as He is beginning to gather into one the dispersed of Israel among the nations; and as with Israel of old and Israel of to-day, God is stirring up the nest of the Church, and teaching His birds to fly. Looking round on the individual members of the Church (and it will be a wonder if we need to leave ourselves out), we are struck with the evident discipline concerning earthly things through which the Lord is making His children to pass. Just as with Israel immediately before the Exodus, the world is making it very hard for a Christian to do his daily work. He has to do it without the world's "straw," and naturally the world favors its own. We see already the beginnings of what will reach full development after the Church is removed: "No man should be able to buy or to sell, save him who has the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name." Rev. 13: 17.

As a rule, the members of the Church are comparatively poor. The rich are few, and certainly the retaining of much wealth is not the mark of a Christian. Yet ere our departure out of Egypt, the Lord seems to be repeating history in giving

His people "favor," so that we are "spoiling the Egyptians" of their best. The Lord is indeed, through his people, gathering jewels from the world, even the choicest and the best out of the Devil's kingdom. There has not been a time, since those first days when she waited and watched in power, that the Church has been so eager for these jewels as to-day: an intuition from the Holy Spirit telling her that it is "in haste" that she must provide for her eternal adornment. And the eagerness is not less notable than the readiness with which the desire is supplied. As on the night of Israel's Exodus, the jewels may be had for the asking.

The parting messages are being given. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And he that hears, let him say, Come. And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely." The last proclamation of the glad tidings of free grace is to-day being made by the Church. It is not evangelists, or pastors, or teachers, who proclaim, but the Church at large — the Bride. It is taken for granted that there is not a member of the Church but has enough of the love of God, in him or her, to desire not to depart to eternal happiness without many parting messages to those who are choosing eternal misery. Blessed are they whose messages bear much fruit in precious souls. These are easily carried when the Exodus flight commences. Such jewels can be taken next the heart. The Pentecostal Church be-

lieved in them: but houses and lands they sold, knowing that they could not carry such. Christians are not in any case notable as owners of real estate, and to-day the expectation of the Lord's coming is having the practical effect of tending to make their title deeds exclusively Heavenly.

My heart warms at remembrance of the itinerant preacher who used to go about in deep poverty, but with a happy heart, overflowing with songs of redeeming love, among which a special favorite was, "No foot of land do I possess." Some one, thinking to do him a kindness, presented him with a title deed to 160 acres of land. But it was not long till the preacher came back to the donor, saying, "Take back your deed: it has stopped my favorite song. And I would rather sing that hymn than own America." When, after some expostulation, the gift was taken back, the happy preacher went on his way, singing his old song:

"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness:
A poor way-faring man,
I lodge awhile in tents below;
Or gladly wander to and fro,
Till I my Canaan gain.

"Nothing on earth I call my own;
A stranger, to the world unknown,
I all their goods despise:
I trample on their whole delight,
And seek a country out of sight,
A city in the skies.

"There is my house and portion fair;
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home;
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me 'Come!'

"I come — thy servant, Lord, replies —
I come to meet Thee in the skies,
And claim my Heavenly rest!
Now let the pilgrim's journey end;
Now, O my Saviour, Brother, Friend,
Receive me to Thy breast!"

In everything the Lord is making the division more clear between His people and the world, just as long ago He "put a division" between Israel and the Egyptians. Are "the diseases of the Egyptians" upon God's people to-day? Certainly not as a people. And what is said in Psalm 105:37 is true of the Church as regards spiritual treasure and spiritual strength, and, to a great extent, as regards physical strength also: "He brought them forth with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among His tribes." If we find bodily feebleness in a member, it is in most cases the fruit of disobedience, and specially the disobedience of walking in outward or inward denial of the truth of the Body. Almost at every observance of the Lord's Supper, the latter half of the 11th chapter of 1st Corinthians is read, but the reader never dares to direct attention to the occasion of Paul's writing these words, which was the impossibility of eating the Lord's Supper, ow-

ing to divisions. Nevertheless, the Church at Corinth was "the Church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours;" and they had never gone our God-dishonoring length, of having separate Lord's tables. I quote one awful verse for sectarians, followed by a solemn warning that this sin of division (which is weakness before the enemy, before our brethren, and in our own souls), will be followed as a natural consequence by weakness of the body, and perhaps falling asleep — that is, the Lord's chastisement instead of the joy of waiting till He come. "He that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he discern not the Body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep."

When all is said, the best readiness of the Church is love. It is as the beauty of a bride that needs no other adorning. Praise be to God if, amid the diseases of Egypt, the oneness of Love has been to us health and strength of soul and body; and if, with Egyptian darkness all round us, the light of Love has been in our dwellings clear enough for the full recognition of every brother and sister who with us is listening for that Exodus trumpet, which shall gather us all together, to be forever with the Lord.

Nor let us forget that it is all of Grace. Who makes us to differ? and what have we that we did

not receive? The health and strength and light and beauty of Love, the listening ear and the watchful eye, the garment of praise and the fine linen of righteous acts, and the shining lamp of testimony: all are of Grace. It is Grace at the cross; Grace when he gathers us; Grace in Heavenly homes through all eternity.

"On such love, my soul, still ponder:
Love so great, so rich, so free!
Say, while lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally!"

THE RETURN OF THE JEW.

Let the Gentile take warning, when the Jew begins again to stir. For it is "notice to quit" to the house of Gentile profession, in other words, Christendom. And it is evident to all eyes that there is to-day such a stirring up of the Jews, both from within and from without, as has not been seen since their dispersion; and such a work of the Holy Spirit among them as has not been since Pentecost. Now, the Jew is God's time-piece, and He reckons earth's time from Jerusalem. But Jerusalem, as His place of earthly manifestation, is no more; and the time-piece stopped at 3 o'clock on that afternoon when the earthly life of the faithful and true Witness was ended. What is it that we see to-day? Is it not God again winding up His time-piece, as about to resume open dealings with the world?

When we see a movement commenced that is the beginning of the end, we may be sure that our time is very close at hand. For the "hardening" of the Jew, and the duration of this Dispensation, is only to be "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." "These glad tidings of the kingdom must first be published in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations. And then shall the end come. . . . Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Let it be noted that I speak of no outward signs in proof of the closeness of the Lord's coming, except in connection with the Jews; and I only mention these signs as one would argue, that if the travelers in the latter section of a train, run in two divisions, are warned by signal that they are nearing the terminus, those in the first section must be still nearer, especially as they are to get out by a private exit, just before the general station is reached. Outward signs are the accompaniment of a Dispensation of outward things. But this Dispensation is not of an outward "mountain" nor of a visible "Jerusalem" but is "in spirit and truth." (See John 4: 20-24.) It is not to the physical world but to the spiritual, that we must look. The Church has no sign by which to know that her Lord is near, but the premonition of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and what is summed up in these words, written in the book of Daniel concerning these days, "They that be wise shall understand."

The return of the Jews to their own land has certainly begun in a notable way, and their coming again into prominence should make even the thoughtless consider. A few years ago, and the name of the Jew was scarcely ever mentioned among the news of the day, unless incidentally as a term of reproach. Now the newspapers are full of items that tell how God's ancient people who, like the Church, have been scattered among all nations and yet not of them, being ever "a holy nation, a people for God's own possession," are to-day also like the Church in awakening from a long sleep. I know not which is the greater miracle: the earthly people, preserved by God in faithfulness through 1823 years of persecution, reproach, and scattering, since the destruction of their temple in the year 70; or the spiritual people, kept alive by God in grace through a like period of tribulation, and in spite of the added ills of their sad failures in hope, faith, and love.

In 1841 there were not in the Holy Land over 8000 Jews. In 1893 there are not less than 80,000. More than a half of the population are Jews, and at least two-thirds in Jerusalem, where there are 30,000 Jews. Thus, for the first time since their dispersion, the Jews are again in a majority in their own land.

It startled France recently to find that the majority of her Prefects were Jews. With less than 500,000 Jews within her borders, the Prefects of

62 out of her 84 departments were of God's ancient people.

And who can look over the eminent names in Statesmanship, Finance, Music, Painting, etc., without being so amazed at the prominence of the Jew, and predominance in actual genius, as to require no persuasion to believe that ere long they will be the foremost nation of the world? Russia and other countries may persecute, but they do so only to their own destruction. For thus saith the Lord concerning his people, "Behold, they may gather together, but not by Me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee. . . . No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Isa. 54: 15, 17.

A recent cartoon represented the Czar of Russia as the modern Pharaoh driving the Jews out of his land through the Atlantic to New York, as their New Jerusalem. Even the world sees the parallel to the Exodus ; but let the persecutor remember the fate of Pharaoh's army after Israel had got to the other side of the sea. Russia is, as before stated, clearly set forth in prophecy as the chief persecutor of the Jews in these days, and her final destruction is foretold in Ezekiel.

History repeats itself : that is, God repeats Himself. The same God who said to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which

are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them:" that God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is to-day listening to the cries of His ancient people, and will as certainly reveal Himself as their Deliverer.

Only those who are laboring among the Jews know what a wonderful work the Holy Spirit is effecting — the general spirit of enquiry and the many undoubted cases of change of heart. Some of the converts in New York, where there has been a very notable work, state that the Lord Jesus has appeared to them in dreams. Is this counted a thing incredible by some? Let them read Job 33:15–18, and the five dreams in the first two chapters of the New Testament, and note that this is but another of the many signs of the closing of this Dispensation, according to the prophecy quoted by Peter (Acts 2:17) which had a first-fruits of fulfillment at Pentecost, and in these days has entered upon a fulfillment in all fullness. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

The Holy Land is now a special object of interest. Surveys, excavations, railways, planting, and building are going on. The world is wondering at this resurrection from the dust of ages; and the Church is considering. Foreseeing these days,

a poet-prophet founds upon this awakening interest the argument that it is therefore time for God to work:

"Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:
For it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time is come;
For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
And have pity upon her dust."

If the servants of Jehovah are taking pleasure in the stones of Zion, and having pity upon her very dust, then surely the time is come for her Lord to have pity upon her. Yet what is the servants' work but the carrying out of the Master's thought? Are we interested in Jerusalem? Are we remembering? What intense interest is His who forgets her never!

The prophecy just quoted from Psalm 102 is now being fulfilled before our eyes, and the continuation of the prophecy will not see long delay of fulfillment. The last siege of the city comes, and her last day of sorrow, when the Lord appears and delivers His people from the assembled nations, and ushers in the millennium. To-day man rebuilds in unbelief: to-morrow God rebuilds. To-day the dust: to-morrow the glory. The prophecy continues:

"So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord,
And all the kings of the earth thy glory:
For the Lord hath built up Zion,
He hath appeared in His glory;
He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute,
And hath not despised their prayer.

This shall be written for the generation to come:
And a people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.
For He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
From Heaven did the Lord behold the earth;
To hear the sighing of the prisoner;
To loose them that are appointed to death;
That men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion,
And His praise in Jerusalem;
When the people are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the Lord."

Again it is prophesied in Psalm 147: "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." And in connection with the gathering together, let us read what Amos prophesied, 2700 years ago: "I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."

Our Lord said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." And when we behold all that is now happening, and most of all when we see such a readiness to listen, and so many of Israel turning to Him whom they pierced, can we say that these times are not fulfilled? Israel is praying, and God is listening.

"Remember thy congregation, which Thou hast purchased of old,
Which Thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of Thine inheritance;
And Mount Zion, wherein Thou hast dwelt."
"Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers:
Let thy tender mercies speedily meet us:

For we are brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name:
And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake."
"Turn again, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts:
Look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,
And the stock which Thy right hand hath planted,
And the branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself."
"For the Lord will not cast off His people,
Neither will he forsake His inheritance."

How often do we join hands with God's ancient people, and plead for this vine, of whose richness we have partaken, and whose rejection was our receiving? How often do we "pray for the peace of Jerusalem"? "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

I behold Zion in exile kneeling eastward towards her old home. It is written, "Zion spreadeth forth her hands; there is none to comfort her." The ancient glory of the King's daughter is gone. But to-day she holds in her hand before the Lord one of His own Forget-me-nots. And I hear Him who loved her of old, saying: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before Me." "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Heph-

zi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. . . . As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

THE GATHERING FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF GOD'S "EASTERN QUESTION."

There are three gatherings going on before our eyes — the spiritual gathering of the Church, the gathering of the Jews to their own land, and the gathering together of men and materials for the settlement of what I call God's "Eastern Question." The "Eastern Question" has always troubled the peace of Europe, and always will, till God's time be come for final settlement. It is the question of Him before whom the walls of Zion are continually, and upon the palms of whose wounded hands she herself is graven with a strange literalness — Have I forgotten? Wherever war may begin in Europe, the real center of all its movements and the ultimate issue of all its operations, will be God's Jerusalem.

The world never saw such a gathering of the clouds of war, and the storm will be all the sorer that it has been so long in gathering; just as the breaking of God's silence in the Day of the Lord will be all the more terrible that it ends the longest silence that God has kept since the Creation. It has been the silence of Grace, and it was meet

that His most glorious work should be crowned with His "long patience." The outcome of these approaching terrible wars is to be the resuming of God's direct dealings with mankind—no longer in grace, but in open judgment upon his enemies. The second psalm gives us a picture of that outcome: raging nations, kings combined against Jehovah and His Christ (nominally against the Jew, but it will be asked again, "Why persecutest thou *Me?*"), a King set upon God's holy hill of Zion, the Son whose inheritance is the nations, and His possession the uttermost parts of the earth.

"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way,
For His wrath will soon be kindled."

We can scarcely realize from figures how immense are the hosts of men armed at this moment with the latest improvements for the wholesale murder of one another. The armies of Europe, in 1893, have been carefully calculated at 4,776,000 men on a "peace footing;" and on a war footing, 22,026,000. The war navies number about 2500 vessels, carrying about 415,000 men.

Some argue that the very immensity of these forces is a guarantee of peace, because of actual

fear of letting them loose. Others argue that the possession of such powers is a constant temptation to use them. But we who are privileged to stand at God's side, and therefrom view all the affairs of this world, behold in these great masses of humanity and the kings and politicians who move them, a gathering of vultures overruled by Jehovah for the speedy devouring of what is corrupt and now tainting the atmosphere, so that in the end a kingdom of Purity and Peace may be established, and that prophecy be fulfilled : "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ : and He shall reign for ever and ever."

FULL RIPENESS.

"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." So is "the time of the end" pictured in the book of the prophet Daniel. Undoubtedly, then, that time is upon us. Pre-eminently it is an age, the characteristic of whose outer life is running to and fro, and the characteristic of whose inner life is knowing, through constant reading and investigating.

The infidel Voltaire, who went to his account in 1778, wrote as follows : "Now look at the mighty mind of Newton, the great philosopher who discovered the law of gravitation. When he became an old man and reached the time of his dotage, he began to study the book called the Bible, and in order to give credit to its fabulous nonsense he

would have us believe that the knowledge of mankind will yet be so increased, that by and by we shall be able to travel 50 miles an hour! Poor dotard!" And in 1819, there appeared the following in the London "Quarterly Review." "We cannot but laugh at an idea so utterly impracticable as that of a road of iron, on which they say one may travel by steam! Can anything be more absurd or laughable than the idea of a steam-propelled wagon, moving twice as fast as our rapid mail coaches? It would be much more possible to travel from Woolwich to the Arsenal by the aid of a Congreve rocket!" The laugh is now very much on the other side.

It was not till about 1840 that the modern railway was fairly started, and the progress made since then has been immense. Probably the United States takes the lead for luxury of traveling and perfection of locomotives — the new railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem having locomotives supplied by Philadelphia. The whole earth seems now being covered with rails, as the sea is with racing steamers, and 72 miles an hour will not long satisfy mankind. Electricity is taking the place of steam, and it is only the fool that will set any other limit to human progress than what may be imposed by God through some special providence.

The electric light is a symbol of that searching light of investigation which man is bringing to bear upon everything under the sun and beyond it. The navigation of the heavens, the inspecting of the

depths of the sea, the discovering of germs of disease, the unveiling of stars whose distances no human mind can grasp, the investigation of psychical phenomena, all the mysteries of the natural and the spiritual — everything must be known.

I am not surprised that many scientists argue that some great crisis is at hand, simply because they think man is beginning to know too much, and is on the verge of mysteries which he will not be allowed to investigate. The tower is getting to be too high, and we may expect the experience of Babel to be repeated. "This is what they begin to do: and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do." And so the Lord scattered the builders.

In the religious world there is the same spirit of investigation, and a wonderful increase of knowledge. The Holy Spirit has been shedding a flood of light upon all that concerns the believer. The mere critics have been unwittingly doing God service in their exegeses; and out of the dust of Egypt, Moab, Babylon, and the Holy Land, has come a resurrection of witnesses to the truth of the sacred record. The Bible is to-day in our hands revised and corrected as book never was before: ancient manuscripts of its contents having been subjected to even the scrutiny of the microscope.

It is not light upon one doctrine only, such as justification by faith, that the Church possesses to-day, but upon every truth, and to a degree un-

known in all her past history. To mention a few things: we better understand the Father as revealed in Jesus Christ; God's present dealings with the world in grace; the personality and workings of the Holy Spirit; the unity of the Church; her connection with Him who is her Head; her attitude towards the world; and this great joy of watching and waiting for the Coming One. Again the darkness is past, and the true light now shines in the Holy Spirit. To my vision, it is the clear shining of the trimmed lamps of the wise virgins — burning their brightest because the Bridegroom is at hand.

The night is not forever. To neither the Church nor the world is there such a thing as continuity of present condition. When the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil comes to its full ripeness, there is a gathering of the good, and a casting away of the bad. But this is an unwelcome truth to the world. It was well remarked the other day by a newspaper, in connection with the reported dismissal of a professor for teaching that the Lord's coming would be before the close of this century — that if he had only been wise enough to say that there was no cause for alarm for at least several hundred years, everybody would have been satisfied. There is a passage (2 Peter 3 : 3–7) which is a true prophecy of these days, when men would like to think that the world is going to continue as it is for countless years, without this (to them) terror of the Lord's coming.

"Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

Continuity has no countenance from the New Testament, and has as little from Science. It is a theory that can only be held by fools, or by such wilfully ignorant people as do not wish to be informed when the house is on fire beneath them, and the tongues of flame are creeping up like serpents to the very bed whereon they lie sleeping. But the world will take its opiates, and cry, "All 's well," up to the very jaws of destruction.

I have no doubt but the scientists and the general sneering public of Noah's day, held the theory of continuity, and told him so. For nigh 1700 years the world had been going on as usual, and for perhaps a century Noah had been forewarning it of a judgment that had never come. He had obeyed God, amid doubtless much ridicule, by preparing a refuge from what was unseen, and far less compre-

hensible than such a coming deluge of fire as is stored beneath our very feet. We do not know that there was a sign in the sky or on the earth, or that the voice was heard by the unbelieving world, when God said, "Come," to Noah, and shut the door of safety upon him and his little company, even as our Lord will say, "Come," to us, and take us up into the shelter of his loving arms. So, when the Flood came, it took the world unawares. "As were the days of Noah, even so shall be the days of the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not till the Flood came, and destroyed them all: so shall be the coming of the Son of man." These are the words of the faithful and true Witness.

THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTENDOM.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now, while the bridegroom delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the

wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Lest there will not be enough for us and you, go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came. And they who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say to you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour."

Here is a picture of the Church and of mere profession, from Pentecost till to-day — a general falling asleep, and now, at this midnight hour, a cry and an awakening. Now again is there recognition of the truth that the mission of the Church is to be a light in darkness, waiting for her coming Lord. There is no contrast between these virgins as regards profession: all are professedly virgins. Nor is it a question of marriage garments. Nor did they differ in holding it to be true that the bridegroom was coming, though they had fallen asleep over it. But the solemn teaching of the parable is: Acceptance, because wise in clear-shining testimony through the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit; Rejection, because foolish — having no testimony, because void of the Holy Spirit, through whom alone testimony can be given. For the oil was the anointing and filling of the Holy Spirit — the witness to-day in the heart of the

Church to a Heavenly relationship; the link of love between her and the coming Bridegroom.

But the foolish virgins, awakened to some interest by the reported nearness of the Bridegroom, found themselves with but the empty lamps of profession. The day was when the Lord Jesus Christ stood outside the door where they worshiped (making some artificial show of shining), and knocked through the Holy Spirit, long and patiently. For their church door was that of Laodicea, the last of the seven stages of profession. To-day it is both the true Church and the unprofessing world that with common consent recognize in Laodicea the unmistakable likeness of modern Christianity. The name is familiar in our mouths as a household word. It is that ecclesiastical system which keeps the world within, and the Lord and the Spirit outside; wherein mere profession finds its ideal — the heart of Vanity Fair covered with the cloak of religion. And the Church beholds here the climax of Grace — Jesus again rejected by the "religious world" and knocking outside His own door, as with Jerusalem, "how often;" and the Holy Spirit, the power that should have been inside, grieved, and giving His last call to repentance. When the glory of the Lord departed from His temple, it went eastward to the Mount of Olives, to the place of the ascension and the coming again, and so shall return, according to the vision in Ezekiel. And in the same manner the Holy Spirit, having left the house of profession,

has gone with the Church to that spiritual place of waiting and ascension that looks eastward towards the rising of the Morning Star.

It is evident that the Church has nothing to do with mere profession. What! Is the Lord rejected and His Church received? Is He an outsider, by His own showing, and she within? Nay, if you want to find the Church, you must always first find where her Lord is. If the five wise virgins slept, they slept by themselves: for they appear as a distinct body, and the Spirit of their Lord was with them. They saw the line clearly drawn between profession and reality. They knew that those five were foolish, and that they themselves were wise through grace. And if the Holy Spirit be within us, we also will have no difficulty in recognizing who are our brothers and sisters, and who are false. We will not be deceived by talk or action, for a spiritual discernment will tell us whether or not these proceed from love to our Lord. With our Lord's footsteps almost in our ears, it is high time we knew who love Him and who love Him not—and that for the sake of the unloving ones as well as for our own sakes.

It is written (Rom. 10:9, 10), "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This is not confessing Jesus as Saviour. "Jesus" means

Saviour. But it is confessing the Saviour as Master. That heart never truly turned to the Lord that did not realize that Love was Master. Even in poor earthly love (poor only by comparison, for all true love is Divine), we know how to test the genuine. If I truly love, I am the servant of the loved one : the child shall lead me into captivity with its tiny hand, and the eyes of the woman shall draw me to her side from the ends of the earth. And when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to behold the crucified One as our Saviour, it is Faith looking at Love, and being in the act transformed into the likeness of Love and into the obedience of Love. Thus, when the light of Love fell upon Saul, on his way to Damascus, he falls on the ground, a persecutor changed into a servant. "And I said, What shall I do, Lord?"

What then is this modern believing with the head? James shows us, in his epistle, how the devils also believe after that fashion, and being more sober-minded than the frothy, jesting Christians of to-day, they "tremble;" but they remain devils still. To preach salvation by a faith of this kind is simply to people Hell. It makes no radical change in the life. As a consequence, our Laodicean churches do not hold that full surrender is the necessary consequence of faith. "Lord" does not mean Master with them. To speak of what should be the ordinary life of every Christian as a "higher life," expected only of an enthusiastic few, shows to what a depth of degradation Laodicea

has fallen. The Church at least holds that full surrender is the normal position of every one who professes to have been redeemed. Alas, how imperfect is our practice! All we can claim is some measure of realization, and a heart-desire for absolute conformity of life to doctrine. I am sure that the following hymn will awaken responsive echoes in the heart of every one of the Family who reads.

"O the bitter shame and sorrow!
That a time could ever be,
When I let the Saviour's pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered,
'All of self, and none of thee.'

"Yet He found me; I beheld Him
Bleeding on th' accursèd tree;
Heard Him pray, 'Forgive them, Father!'
And my wistful heart said, faintly,
'Some of self, and some of thee.'

"Day by day His tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full, and free,
Sweet and strong, and O, so patient,
Brought me lower, while I whispered,
'Less of self, and more of thee.'

"'Higher than the highest heaven,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, Thy love at last has conquered;
Grant me now my spirit's longing —
None of self, and all of Thee.'"

If the Lord Jesus should thus be from the heart acknowledged as Master by every Christian, so He ought to be by Christendom. And that was un-

doubtedly the root idea of Christian governments. Christendom is defined in Webster's International Dictionary as, "That portion of the world in which Christianity prevails, or which is governed under Christian institutions, in distinction from heathen or Mohammedan lands." And it will be conceded that the most favorable representations of Christendom are the United States, which impresses on its coins, "In God we trust;" and Great Britain, whose coins bear an inscription, of which the rendering is, Victoria, by the Grace of God, Queen of Britain, Defender of the Faith.

"In God we trust:" I suppose a greater lie was never imprinted on a nation's coinage. For the United States trusts in almost everything but God; and principally in that emblem of Mammon which is so worshiped as to have popularly bestowed upon it one of the attributes of God — the Almighty Dollar. No nation can trust God unless it knows Him. That man is popularly accounted a fool in this wide-awake country, who will trust another with ten cents unless he knows him. And that the nation trusts an unknown God with the management of its affairs, is as absurd as it is morally impossible. That the nation does not know God, and therefore does not trust Him, is not hard of proof. For if the nation knew God it would love Him. That would be as inevitable as what Christ said to the nation of the Jews: "You say that He is your God; and you have not known Him. . . . If God was your Father, you would love Me." Now, it is

evident that the nation does not love God. For if it loved God, it would not, for one thing, give its cents to Him, and its dollars to the Devil. Let us look at a few facts in proof.

The United States gives every year (the first two items have to be "collected;" the latter two are freely wasted) —

For Home and Foreign Missions	$ 5,500,000
" Salaries of Pastors, etc	12,000,000
" Tobacco	600,000,000
" Intoxicating Liquors	1,200,000,000

This represents per head of our population:

For Home and Foreign Missions	$0 08 $\frac{8}{10}$
(Foreign Missions alone about 6 cents.)	
" Salaries, etc	0 19
" Tobacco	9 58
" Liquors	19 17

Or the above amounts would enable this nation to place on *every letter* of the Bible, of the money that is inscribed with her trust in God:

$1.54 to spread the glad tidings of God's love at home and abroad.

$3.36 to pay pastors, etc.

$504.70 for the waste, dirt, and destruction of two only of her vices.

Great Britain, whose Queen represents it "by the grace of God," as "Defender of the Faith," gives, to tell the heathen abroad of God's free offer of the water of life, $5,000,000; and for self-indulgence in the Devil's water of death

$706,250,000. This represents per head of her population :

For the God professedly worshiped	$ 0 13
For one of the gods actually worshiped	18 75

And this god Bacchus cannot be worshiped without human sacrifices. 125,000 of the British people go down every year to a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's Hell, and this country swells the awful torrent with 150,000 victims. But what shall we say of the Christianity that can make lawful by license this constant snare and temptation to all classes and conditions ; this admitted cause of nine out of every ten crimes; this fountain of countless miseries ; this nursery of lawlessness, prostitution, and political corruption ; this civil war that means increasing and hopeless slavery, and a slaughter so gigantic that it would appall us —only we are so used to it ! The very devils of Hell might blush at the blasphemy of countries calling themselves Christian licensing and drawing their principal revenues from such an accursed traffic. The Christ who came, not to destroy men's lives but to save them, has neither part nor lot in such a spurious Christianity. "Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe on Me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hung about his neck, and he were sunk in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of occasions of stumbling ! For it is impossible but that the occasions should come : but

woe to that man through whom the occasion comes!" And woe to that nation! "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and those who work lawlessness, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth."

It is quite evident from the foregoing figures, in what relative esteem and affection the two foremost Christian nations of the world hold God and the Devil. The United States "trusts" God with $5,500,000 for spreading salvation; and the Devil gets $1,800,000,000 for spreading filth and damnation, in two articles alone. To call such a nation "Christian" is too absurd. It is as out of place as writing "Holiness to the Lord" on a cask of whisky, or a box of cigars, or on a novel of fashionable life, or on the immodest undress of the ball rooms of Christendom. But for that part of it, "Holiness to the Lord" would be as strangely out of place at the fairs and socials of the churches.

You may say that I should add, in making the above contrast, the $12,000,000 spent on pastor's salaries, and also the large sums expended from time to time in erecting costly "churches." But I have said nothing, on the other hand, about the costly temples where Bacchus is worshiped, which far surpass all churches in numerousness, and in the multitude and devotion of their worshipers — the services going on in many of these temples day

and night for ever ; nor do I make any mention of the salaries of the officiating priests and their assistants.

I may here remark, that while many true members of the Church have helped to build costly edifices for worship, out of a sincere belief that they were promoting God's glory — the idea was a mistaken one, and was based upon a misconception of the spirit of this Dispensation. For the difference between the Church and the Jew in this matter of worship, is as radical as between Grace and Law. It was an outward ceremonial worship in the one case : it is a spiritual unconventional worship in the other. And since the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, there is no Divinely-sanctioned place of worship, except that one which our Lord has forever hallowed with His presence, and which has the consecration of the Holy Spirit, abiding in each blood-washed temple : "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them." For this Dispensation is that which our Lord proclaimed at Jacob's well to the outsider : "The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth : for such does the Father seek to be His worshipers. God is a Spirit : and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Therefore the place of worship is nothing, but the spirit of the worshipers is everything.

"Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

"For Thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind:
Such ever bring Thee where they come;
And going, take Thee to their home."

Why, then, did one of the largest congregations in these States spend last year nearly $250,000 on a church, that is, on stone and lime; and for the heathen, that is, for souls that might become spiritual temples to the glory of God, $80. Eighty dollars! ! ! I wonder what the devils think of that congregation. We can see the sad looks of the angels. We can hear Him sigh who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

And as regards the $12,000,000 for salaries of pastors, if it be the message of salvation that these are preaching, Lord's day after Lord's day to the same people without result, it is the mind of Christ that those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, should at least have a chance. Wherefore, preachers, move on! Be not hindered from obedience to the command to go into all the world and preach the glad tidings to the whole creation, by love of worldly ease or of gold, in this adding to your salaries by commissions, and fees for marrying, burying, and baptizing. O noble Paul, what would you say to all this — you who could call the Church to witness, when you were passing on, after three

years of admonishing "every one, night and day with tears," that you had not followed preaching as a trade, but from love of souls. "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, how that so laboring you ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

If you modern preachers will not take an example from your Lord and Master, take one from Paul. But know this, that in disobedience you are working ruin to your own souls, and damnation to the souls of those over whom you have assumed charge. For this gospel is either a savor "from life unto life," or "from death unto death." These people that sit in these pews, professing "Lord, Lord," every Lord's day, are hearing this same repeated gospel from you to their ever-increasing hardening of heart, and to the making more sure of their final sentence from the Lord, "I know you not." "The land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it . . . if it bears thorns and thistles, is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned."

But perhaps you preachers are *teaching* believers Lord's day after Lord's day. Then this is exactly the kind of them that Paul prophesied would be "in the last days:" "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;"

"holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." Otherwise there would be prompt obedience, and every congregation would be a missionary society. From the world's point of view, modern Christianity does not consider the message of salvation worth the paper it is printed on.

If it be really teaching that keeps you preachers so constantly employed at home, it can have no meaning unless it be the teaching of believers, that is, those who have passed out of death into life; for you cannot possibly teach the dead. But what then does your teaching amount to, when, repeated week after week, and year after year, to those who profess to be new creatures in Christ, risen to resurrection life in Him — what does all this sermonizing amount to, with its "heads" and "applications," if it does not instill the very first principle of obedience? Alas, brother preachers, if these congregations of yours were really born again, they would not need so much persuading. Move on, brothers, move on; and leave these masses of pew-sitting Christianity to the Lord's dealings.

After about 1900 years since the command to "Go" was given:

Heathendom has on an average	1	missionary	to	every		166,000
India	"	"	"	"	"	275,000
Persia	"	"	"	"	"	300,000
Thibet	"	"	"	"	"	2,000,000
Anam has only Roman Cath. missionaries to its pop.						5,000,000
Afghanistan has no missionary				"	"	6,000,000

Taking the most favorable view of the situation, there is in all heathendom, reckoning "regular" missionaries and "irregular" as well, women and native workers, an average of 1 worker to every 31,000 ; while at home, reckoning preachers "ordained" by man and ordained only by God, with Sunday-school teachers included, there is at the very least 1 worker to every 48 of our population.

Nero, fiddling over burning Rome, has become a by-word for cold-bloodedness. But what shall we say of this nineteenth century Christianity, orthodox though it may be in holding fast salvation by faith and not by works, and damnation in eternal fires for all who believe not — which allows millions upon millions to perish, whose birthright, of which Christendom has defrauded them, was a spiritual "liberty, fraternity, and equality." I am not forgetting the 6 cents per head from this land of freedom, nor the 13 cents from the other land of freedom ; and if any one thinks either of these sums to be the value of a substitute, so that he may escape from service, there will be judgment given as to that, when the Lord of the servants comes and makes a reckoning with them.

If Christ taught anything, it was self-denial and cross-bearing. The very essence of His teaching is to be nothing and to endure all things, to the end that His kingdom may be advanced in ourselves and others. "If any one would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever would save

his life shall lose it; but whoever shall lose his life for My sake and for the glad tidings, he shall save it." "And he who does not take his cross, and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me." "If any man comes to Me, and hates not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can not be My disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross, and come after Me, can not be My disciple." Not the pretty trinket of gold, silver, or precious stones, that Laodicea hangs about her neck, but a true cross, on which the world may any moment make a martyr. Not that denial of self that San Francisco shows when she spends *$1,750,000* every year on candies; nor that denial of self that New York's young women show, when they spend yearly more than $6,000,000 on chewing gum, being $500,000 more than the nation's combined contributions to the salvation of the world, abroad and at home. Judaism will rise in the Judgment against such Christianity and condemn it; for the Jew gave his 10 per cent to Jehovah; and when the sanctuary in the wilderness was being erected, Israel had to be restrained, because of the superabundance of their offerings.

The essence of this spurious Christianity of Laodicea is Self. Examine her works, and you will find that they all harmonize with self-pleasing and self-indulgence. Inside are the cushioned pews and the comforts of a drawing-room, a worship accommodated to the flesh, a worship that

pays cash and gets a certain "value received" in paid singers, paid instrumentalists, paid sermons, and paid prayers. Outside is the Lord. Look at His hands. Has Laodicea any experience of wounds? And look at His feet: yea, and at these marks of thorns. And in His side there is a wound where the spear went through to a heart that was broken, because "He came to His own, and they that were His own received Him not." It was the professed Church that crucified Him, and it is the professed Church that is crucifying Him afresh to-day, and putting Him to an open shame before the infidel and the heathen. The saloon, the house of impurity, and the gambling hell, are the coarse works of the Devil; but the unconverted "church" is his masterpiece. It will make more infidels and criminals than an Ingersoll. What a revelation lies in the awful fact that of every 10,000 criminals in English prisons, 6,000 — six out of every ten, were once scholars in Sunday-schools! And the conversion of the children is no more the direct aim of teachers here than it is there. "If even the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be restored? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill. Men cast it out."

Christendom is thus, like Judaism, terminating in failure as a testimony. But if the light that is in Christendom be darkness, how great is the darkness! To her belongs the ignominy of having become in addition a corrupting and destroying influence. Instead of saving, her principal study

just now is how most effectively to destroy both soul and body.

The European nations of Christendom stand to-day watching one another, with their fingers on the triggers of their guns. I leave out of our former reckoning, Turkey, in whose religion war is a consistent item, and I find that the wholesale human butchers of those European countries that call themselves Christian, number, on what they term "a peace footing," 4,617,000 men. This enormous host would give Christendom 5 men, armed for slaughter of their professed brothers in Christ, for every letter of the New Testament, the message of peace from God to man ; and there would be a small reserve of 425,000 remaining, after the 5 butchers had been detailed off to supply the final "n" of the "Amen" that closes the book of the Revelation. So much for the peace footing of the land forces only. And on what these Christian nations call a "war footing," that is, including the reserves that experience of one another's Christianity in the past has dictated as prudent, these land armies would number, at the very lowest estimate, 21,226,000.

Christendom, the special domain of the Prince of Peace, is to-day, except in these States, one vast war camp. Appolyon, the Destroyer, and his angels, have never since the days of Cain seen such cause for rejoicing — such a gathering of men, such training in the art of slaughter, such perfection of appliances for the destruction of the body,

and it may be said in most cases of the soul at the same time, such prospective horrors and burdens innumerable, mutilations, diseases, crimes, heart-breakings, fatherless children, and widowed mothers.

Was it not to the representatives of the Church of His day, that our Lord said, "You are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning"? But these Jews were more righteous than Christendom, for they never professed a gospel of peace.

And we in this country have among us this same spirit of Cain, who "was of the evil one, and slew his brother." The graves are still green in our national cemeteries, where 300,000 bodies, slain by the hands of brothers, lie awaiting the resurrection of life or the resurrection of judgment. The nation that prays to God in its Congress, and imprints the name of God and its trust in Him upon its coins, might surely have been expected to have conducted its warfare upon Christian principles.

I see the opposing forces. I hear the cry of, "Chaplains to the front!" They kneel together, and the armies kneel with them — Union and Confederate. And the old prayer comes from tens of thousands of lips, "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in Heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts; for we also have forgiven every one who is

indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Amen." Then a chaplain from the South, being out of courtesy given precedence, says, "Let us examine the word of the God in whom we have till now trusted, and see what His regulations are for the settlement of the disputes of Christians — whether by fire and sword, or otherwise :"

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called sons of God."

"Resist not him who is evil: but whoever smites you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also."

"Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who persecute you: that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

"If you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

"A new commandment I give to you, That you love one another : even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Then a chaplain from the North remarks, "With all due deference to the brother who preceded me, I cannot say that the passages he has just read

seem altogether appropriate to the commencement of a battle. To raise our spirits I will now give out a hymn, in which all the regimental bands will assist, and so familiar that not a soldier on either side need be silent:"

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast:
There, by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! 't is the voice of angels,
Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of glory,
Over the crystal sea.

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world's temptations;
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears;
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears!

"Jesus, my heart's dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o'er,
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore."

And I behold that meeting for murder on Christian principles closed in tears, and with the benediction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Would that it had been more than a vision.

But another irritant evil is in our midst, a corruption of Christendom which will come to an issue in the near future; and whether the settlement will be on Christian principles or by blood, God knows. Christianity is essentially communistic, and its communism is of Grace, flowing inevitably from that communism in which our Lord makes us partakers of everything that He has — His cross below, His throne above, and His "all things." "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. . . . If the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not. For I say not this, that others may be eased, and you distressed: but by equality; your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want; that there may be equality." (2 Cor. 8:9, 12–14.) We read of those happy days of the Church's first love, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. . . . Great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any

one had need." They but followed the inevitable conclusions of our Lord's teachings, as applied to their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and became as servants waiting for their Lord.

But since the communism of Grace has been forsaken by an apostate Christianity, another communism has arisen which knows neither Grace nor Law, and which is to-day developing as rapidly as is the corruption of Christendom. That a crisis will come, and that very soon, no one need question. Millionaires are rapidly multiplying, so that half of the wealth of the United States is to-day in the hands of about 25,000 people. This concentration of wealth is at the expense of the 63,000,000 of our population, who become every day more exposed to the tyranny and demoralization of the money power. "Jehovah will enter into judgment with the elders of His people, and the princes thereof: It is you who have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses: what mean you that you crush My people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts." (Isaiah 3:14, 15.) We in California understand what the eating up of the vineyard means. It only requires the upper jaw of a soulless Railway monoply with eating-up rates of freight, and the lower jaw of a soulless mortgagee, with an eating-up rate of interest. New York, Chicago, and all our big cities, know what grinding the face of the poor means. And the evil is aggravated, and the day of vengeance made more sure, by the way

our population is abandoning agricultural pursuits and flocking into cities. In 1790, 3 in every 100 lived in cities; in 1890, it was 29 in every 100. The "grinding" is as bad in the Mother country. I read the other day of a manufacturer there, a professing Christian, and "worth" at least $5,000,000, who pays his young women employees 5 shillings ($1.22) per week: that is, they have about 17 cents a day, and are left to make up the balance necessary for existence, as they can, amid the temptations of a large town. It is well known in London that young women in some of its high-toned establishments, are expected to supplement their admittedly insufficient wages by immorality.

"Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers . . . which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them . . . have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts."

How many are slain every year by Mammon, this chief god of Great Britain and the United States — broken down in the battle for bread, worn out trying to make a mere living, killed at last by the competition that takes the very crust from their mouths! Strong drink slays every year in these

two nations 275,000 souls, but an immense number of the slain by Bacchus should rather be added to the victims of the greater god.

Christendom will not only squeeze the life out of her own flesh and blood at home, but she will slay the heathen abroad, if there is only money in it. And so she ships every year to Africa in the proportion of 70,000 barrels of rum, as an offset to every 1 missionary sent there. The rum is about the vilest poison ever manufactured, but there is all the more profit in it. In the good Christian State of Massachusetts is the largest distillery in the world. Its output every day in the year is 90 barrels of 43 gallons each. This would represent, per year, 32,850 barrels and 1,412,550 gallons. The greater part of this is "rum," that goes to the coast of Africa. And this Christian nation draws a yearly revenue from that distillery alone of $1,090,179, or more than 1½ cents per head of our population. Thus the nation gets refunded, by this one distillery, more than one fourth of all it spends for the conversion of the heathen to its rum-selling Christianity. So, when we sing that missionary hymn about "Afric's sunny fountains," let us not forget that our Christian civilization has at last found out the poor heathen, and opened for him fountains dark and foul with the Devil's water of death, sold at a good profit. The entire revenue from distilled liquors of this nation that worships Mammon, while she puts "In God we trust" on

her coins, is about $63,000,000 per year, equal to about $75 for every letter in the New Testament. Truly a hellish revenue for a Christian nation.

The country whose Queen defends the faith, is in no way behind the United States in corrupting the heathen. Her chief ecclesiastical dignitary, the Archbishop of Canterbury, received lately from a native of Congo, Africa, a letter which reads as follows: "Great and good chief of the tribe of Christ, greeting: The humblest of your servants kisses the hem of your garment and begs you to send to his fellow-servants more Gospel and less rum — Ugalla."

But the heathen Chinese might tell the heathen African that there was something even more deadly than that vile rum, even the poisonous drug, opium. This, Christian England forced upon China by a war, upon a nation representing one third of the population of the world, to the most sure ruin of the body, for the opium vice is an almost hopeless one, and to the as sure ruin of the soul, according to England's most orthodox belief. And let it be noted, that the very same treaty which binds China to receive the English opium, binds her also to protect the English missionary. There is a blasphemous look about this; or is it a shrewd attempt to do a good turn for God, while engaged in the active service of the Devil? If we look at the description of Babylon, in chapter 18 of the Revelation, we see a list of her merchandise. Gold heads the list, Silver, second, and so on till we come

to the second last item, which is Bodies, and the very last item is Souls of men. Babylon has for her mother, Laodicea, and for her father, the world ; and she combines the features of both.

English Christians are to-day knocking at the door of Parliament to see if this reproach cannot be wiped away; though the evil has now spread and multiplied, and come home to roost with Christendom — foul birds of many varieties. But the answer they get is, that England cannot afford to do what is right — the finances of India not being in a flourishing condition, and the revenue from opium being such a very considerable item. For the Christian rulers of India send every year to the heathen Chinese 5000 tons of this deadly poison. In chemists' weight, this quantity equals 78,400 millions of grains, or enough to place 93,513 grains on every letter of the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is what England gives these 400,000,000 of people in return for their genial tea, that refreshes many a weary Christian. And I do not wonder that the unenlightened Chinese, sitting in darkness, and not enjoying the advantages of gospel light, are beginning to call this hellish drug, "Jesus opium."

Christendom can never compare in missionary zeal with the old scribes and Pharisees, for they "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte;" but a comparison might be instituted when our Lord adds, "And when he is become so, you make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves."

If it was "Woe" to these hypocrites for that retail business, what shall it be for this wholesale business of damnation in which the two foremost nations of Christendom are engaged?

"If the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." Profession means to-day that professors may mingle year after year with non-professors, and these be not only unaffected for good, but in all probability still further corrupted; for nothing is so corrupting as a corrupt Christianity. Laodicea has shown the world which she loves, the wonderful adaptability of her religion: how the bank-president may swindle the widow and the orphan, and all the more readily from being at the same time a Sunday school superintendent; how the employer of labor may cut down wages, and with the dollars saved build a church; and how the grocer may slowly poison his customers with adulterated goods, or more quickly with liquor, cheat in weight and measure, and yet sit down at the Lord's table, as one who has a personal acquaintance with the spotless Saviour.

I do not wonder that the Lord puts the question, "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" The "churches" are the wholesale manufacturers of infidels; and worldlings very sensibly argue that if church members can do such things, consistently with profession, they, who make none, may go even farther.

Truth, when it comes in antagonism with popular prejudice, is always unwelcome. It was unwelcome when Christ spoke it to the religious world of His day: it is as unwelcome to that world in 1893. Our ecclesiastical systems, and our entire collection of traditions received from the past, have become so incorporated in our social life that to speak against them is like speaking against one's self. Mere religionists will scarcely believe a word said against a Christendom clothed with all the prestige of age, custom, associations, tender memories, and their own personal connection. But Slavery, with all its wrongs and miseries, was also a domestic institution, part and parcel of the social life of many of our sister States, and with some recognition in the very Constitution of this Christian nation. And the truth about Slavery was excessively unpalatable to very many before the war. Nevertheless the unpalatableness did not alter the truth nor obviate the crisis.

Nor can the truths now stated be affected because of their unpalatableness, nor can a coming crisis, that is, the rejection of Laodicea, be averted. Laodicea is unpalatable to the Lord: "I will spue thee out of My mouth." He Himself draws the curtain from her, and reveals her much talk and much self-satisfaction — the big "I" being her starting point: "Thou sayest, I." Here is the very opposite of true religion. For true religion says, I am nothing, but my Jesus is

everything. Laodicea says, "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." There is no room for Jesus in her house: His place who for our sakes became poor, is to-day as at His first coming, the place of an outsider.

But after the language of the world, which she speaks, Laodicea is rich. It is gold inside, and Jesus outside; it is much goods laid up within, and "the unsearchable riches of Christ" without. Rich indeed is Laodicea in superfluities — jewelry, fine furniture, handsome houses, dainty food, costly apparel: while He stands outside the door, knocking and unattended to, who set us an example of voluntary poverty, in order that the many might become rich. Will any one venture to calculate how many times the missionary money given by the two chief nations of Christendom would need to be multiplied in order to equal the sum total of their superfluities? And the amount of their actual waste must be something appalling. It is said that in the United States the food waste alone would suffice to feed all the millions of Europe. Rich also is Laodicea in intellectual and even cultured preaching. Culture is her idol, and carries its own condemnation in its barrenness. It is to pulpit and pew that which fills the place of the rejected Holy Spirit. It is a glamour of light: a Devil's sunshine to hasten the ripening of Christendom for judgment.

There is a story told of Thomas Aquinas and the Pope. After showing Aquinas over the im-

mense treasures of the Vatican, the Pope remarked: "You see, Thomas, the day has departed, when I could say with my great predecessor, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "Yea," replied Thomas, "and likewise has the day departed when your faith could add, 'But what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth — walk!'"

The power has departed from Laodicea, but she "has need of nothing" from the Lord. She has no need of power, for she has no testimony to give. Nor has she need of the Spirit as Comforter, for Laodicea long ago ceased to mourn an absent Lord. Nor does she need the Spirit to give character to her worship, for that is fleshly; nor as an inspiring power therein, for the services of Laodicea are rigidly mechanical.

"If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." As surely, if any church has not the Spirit of Christ, it is none of His. And it would be nothing short of blasphemy to say that the church system of to-day reflects the spirit of its professed Lord and Master. The reflection is not from above but from below. If I see one spirit conspicuous and growing, it is the spirit of irreverence. And if you say that Love may coexist with irreverence, you say what is a moral impossibility. For Love is ever reverential: it is her very nature. You know that when the love of a man for a woman is true, that from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, she is sacred;

sacred also in all her belongings ; the very air she breathes seems holy ; and her name is not to be lightly uttered. If it be so with what is but a spark from the Divine love, how much more with the Divine itself ? The irreverent man is one who never knew what it was to love the Lord Jesus ; whose heart never saw Gethsemane or Calvary, and knows nothing of waiting for the coming again. The conclusion is evident as regards the flippant, jesting, irreverent Christianity that is around us. God will not suffer this to continue. If you want a sure sign of approaching judgment, here it is in this profane impertinence. And if you want a sure sign of the corruption of Christendom, here it is in this foul gas rising from it.

The higher the organism, the more unbearable is its corruption. The decaying leaf is bearable ; the rotten egg is offensive ; the corruption of the human body is unbearable. But how unspeakably offensive, how absolutely unbearable, should be corruption in the domain of the spiritual. Reason tells us that it undoubtedly ought to be so ; and that it is not so, only proves how blunted are our moral sensibilities.

When the dead body is becoming offensive through corruption, we put it away from us. And the Lord will do the same with the moral corruption of Christendom. Shall we say that Laodicea, revealed to us as its last stage of profession, is not yet corrupt enough for judgment and burial out of sight ? Grace still knocks at the door ; but for

how long? One day (and the rapid progress of corruption tells us that the day is at hand), there will be no one outside the door of Laodicea. The outsider, the Holy Spirit, will be gone. The outsider, the Lord Jesus, will be gone; likewise the the outsider, the Church which is His body.

A RETURN TO FIRST CONDITIONS.

In passing to this new heading, I feel relief. I have been night-watching, sadly and wearily, beside the bed of one on whom corruption has already set its seal — dying, and yet knowing it not. I have seen the lamp of life going out amid the fog of the world's opiates, and the deadly atmosphere of its stimulants: for the world, when it comes to the facing of death, thinks it kind to cover the eyes, and dull the senses, and say, Believe it not. It is just at the brink if ever, that the soul is allowed to wake up with the cry of despair, My lamp is going out! But I now pass out into the open air, and, climbing one of the hills of God, behold in the east the Morning Star, and below in the horizon the soft gleam of dawn.

God brings us back every twenty-four hours to morning. And if we could better perceive with the eyes of our hearts, we would better understand the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in their great work of Restoration. Does God take from us the light of day? it is to restore it more sweetly in the morning. Does He take from us the light of our eyes? the Lord restores the son to his widowed

mother, the brother to his sisters, and the little girl to her parents, not forgetting, in the thoughtfulness of love, to tell them to give her something to eat. And if He has taken away from His Church the light of His countenance, in bodily presence, is there no sweet dawn of morning in which we shall again see his face? We may as well ask if the lover who has gone to a far land can forget the lovelight in the eyes of his beloved? These eyes will yet draw him back from the other side of the world. And will he not return who is the Fountain of that love, and whose going has been only to prepare a place for his own, and to come again to receive them to Himself? As surely as to sleeping man He who slumbers not nor sleeps brings His sun again at an appointed moment, so to the Church, wakened from her slumbering and sleeping, comes the moment fixed from all eternity, when our Morning Star shall appear, and we shall rise to meet Him, changed into His very image. Then shall a spiritual creation repeat the gladness of the laying of earth's foundations, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

We have to do with One who is harmonious and consistent in all His workings. If I might venture upon a simile through which to convey my conception of the workings of God towards His own, where they have free course, I would liken them to a river of love, proceeding out of the Heavenly

throne — living waters of the Holy Spirit, going forth, permeating, enriching, vivifying the souls of the redeemed and the myriads of spirits whom we call angels; and returning whence they issued, in a hallelujah flood of love and blessing for Him who, being the greatest giver, is therefore the happiest of all existences. And so it is written, "Of Him" (as the source), "and through Him" (as permeating all providences), "and unto Him" (returning to the heart of love, that is the Home of all His children), "are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen." This blessed circle seems to be the thought of all God's dealings with every one who will only consent to be embraced within its symbol of eternity. There was a Paradise, and there was a wandering therefrom. But Israel, whether after the flesh or after the spirit, have never been alone. Love has always gone forth with them hand in hand. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." And the circuit closes with a return to a restored Paradise, divinely surpassing that which was lost. Or we see a fold, and a sheep that has strayed therefrom. But all along its wandering way the Shepherd follows it until He finds it. And the circle closes thus: "He restoreth my soul . . . and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." We thus see that a return to

first conditions, and with intensified characteristics, signifies the termination of one of God's circular histories.

In Music, the keynote of the opening bars may suffer many transitions, and there may be many apparent wanderings from the first "motive," or subject; but towards the close (and we know it is nearing the grand finale because of this), there is a return to the original key and to the original motive, in a manner suggestive of the near closing chords. Thus, if he who has the spiritual ears to hear will listen to the manner of the song of redeeming grace that the Church is to-day singing, he will know that the end is near.

There never was music heard in this world like the music of the voice of Jesus, telling of free grace all the way to Calvary: "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The music has a plaintive ring on that night of rejection when, after His promise to come again, and the supper that is to continue as a remembrance till He come, our Lord sings a hymn with His own before they go out to the Mount of Olives — He to agony, shame, death, and burial. And since that night there has continued all through the ages the music of Grace, though often mingled with discordant sounds, caused by transition to the inharmonious Law, by those who understood not the spirit of their Dispensation; and heard for the most part through comparative darkness as the songs of God's nightingales — in the iron cage, in the desert,

and on the mountain side. But in these days the discords are dying away, and we hear the music swelling majestically on the old true keynote of Grace—in rich chords on the original motive of "Whosoever will," so full, so strong, so sweet, that we know that it is to closing chords that we are listening. We know then that the day is near when we shall be caught up together, and the music shall return in the Father's house into the hands of the great Choirmaster, even as it is written, "In the midst of the Church will I sing Thy praise."

What a wonderful change has come over both the songs and the music of the Church. It is not many years ago that Christians seemed to consider their hymns of praise incomplete, if the last stanza did not contain a reference to the time "when mine eyes shall close in death," viewing that as the termination of the earthly pilgrimage, though the whole teaching and spirit of the New Testament was against them. Now-a-days, such hymns are rarely heard in gatherings of Christians, but on the contrary, hymns containing references to our blessed Hope are becoming more and more common.

And in harmony with this change, the pathetic "minor" in the music is dying out before the jubilant "major." Not that the minor will ever die, except as a general outward expression. It has been as the tender wife who has carried on the business of the partnership with a certain charming plaintiveness during the necessary absence of her lord. Not death then will it be, but transla-

tion ; and in Heaven to endless ages the minor will be the individual expression of those true feminine elements which are blended in every soul of the redeemed — the gentleness and pathos of lowly love.

But not only in character but also in degree do we see a revolution, some return of the time when "each one" in the primitive Church had a psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, when they came together. Not many years ago, in orthodox Scotland, the regular allowance prescribed by the minister to the worshipers, was 4 verses of a psalm, three times or at most four times during the service, with sermons averaging an hour, and prayers that made one think of those of whom Christ said that they expected to be "heard for their much speaking"— for it certainly was not praying. But to-day Scotland, thanks greatly under God to this country, has changed all that ; and on both sides of the Atlantic we are becoming again a singing Church. The old austerity that seemed the necessary garb of religion, has given place to somewhat of joy, and "the spirit of heaviness" has been laid aside to a great extent for "the garment of praise." The psalms of the night, breathing of a by-gone Dispensation of law, judgment, and death, have given place to songs that speak of grace, redemption, life eternal, and a salvation ready to be revealed when Jesus comes. I am reminded of early mornings, when in the country, near a leafy thicket, I have heard, ere ever I saw a beam of the coming light, first a

twitter and a few notes from some little hidden one of God's birds; then another would join in; and another and another would waken and sing: till in a short time, even before the sun was risen, there would be a full, glad chorus of these wee songsters. And so, with other birds of the Lord, the Holy Spirit is inspiring a fullness of praise by telling them that the dawn is near, when they shall spread their wings and fly to a land of light and gladness and everlasting song.

Two sure signs of dawn are the singing of God's birds, and the spreading of His light. Since those days when it was possible for John to write, "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things," there has not been such a fullness of light upon all things concerning the Lord and His Church. There is to-day fulfilled in a very remarkable manner the promise of Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit: "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself, but whatever He shall hear that shall He speak, and He shall make manifest to you the things that are to come." The light that is with the wise virgins is one. It is at once the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and that illumination shining through in testimony to the world. I do not need to enlarge. I speak to those who understand: to others explanations are useless. The Lord puts just before the coming of the bridegroom the trimming of the lamps, so that with the wise virgins there may be

a return to the clearness of shining of the days of first love. And if we see something of this going on before our eyes, we need not be in darkness as to where we stand in relation to the time of the coming of Him we wait for.

It is another return to first conditions that the Church to-day believes, as it has not done since Pentecost, in the Holy Spirit — the oil in the lamps of these wise virgins. It is a time of restored belief in Him as the only power for conversion, for personal holiness, for testimony, for guidance, and for all service. And there is a restoration of belief in His gifts and manifestations to the Church such as has not existed since these first days. Unbelief in the Holy Spirit has meant the utter powerlessness of the Church. But with the restoration of belief in Him as the same to-day as at Pentecost, comes as a natural consequence our understanding of His readiness to fulfill the very purpose for which He came, namely, to bestow gifts upon the Church and manifest Himself for comfort, cleansing, testimony, and service, in ways not ecclesiastical, but according to His good pleasure. Granted that the Holy Spirit is unchangeable ; granted that He was sent by our Lord to His own as an abiding presence and with a special testimony ; granted that that testimony is not yet accomplished ; granted that the church has to-day responsibilities and needs greater far than existed at the day of Pentecost : there follows the inevitable conclusion that our restoration of belief in the Holy Spirit can have

but one consistent attitude, and that is, that we should, for the glory of our Lord in the Church and before the world, lay hold of the Spirit's willingness to give us a practical and abundant acquaintance with the truths in the following passage from His word (1 Cor. 12 : 4–11) : "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom ; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit : to another faith, in the same Spirit ; and to another gifts of healings, in the same Spirit ; and to another workings of miracles ; and to another prophecy ; and to another discernings of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; and to another the interpretation of tongues : but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will."

Inevitably, also, with this restored belief in the Holy Spirit, comes the restored looking not for death but for the Lord. For what has the Spirit to do with death? And if we have that Spirit within us, by Him formed into the Church which is the body of Christ, by Him linked to our Head in resurrection life — What have we to do with death? Death, as such, is forever "abolished," and even the existence of what is to-day to those

who fall asleep but its shadow, is an irregularity and a contradiction in the Divine life that is within us. "For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also with Him be manifested in glory." Our position therefore is: In life; waiting for the manifestation of the fuller life.

The crowning grace and fruit of the Spirit is Love; and the most beautiful of all the returns of these days to first conditions, is, first, the longing heart for our Lord's appearing, and then, the drawing together in heart of all the Lord's children, as they draw nigh to Home. Conferences multiply, and unions of all kinds — practical confessions that union and mutual help have not been found in the competing systems of many names which are of man, or, to trace their parentage farther back, of the Devil. We now look at a sectarian barrier, and say with David, "in the day that the Lord delivered him," "By my God do I leap over a wall." We ask one another if the Lord's work at home and abroad would not be blessed beyond all experience if His own children would only work together in wise and loving co-operation, instead of showing forth the divided Christ of sectarianism, to His dishonor and our weakness before the adversary. We have at last got the length of shaking hands with all of the Lord's children, simply because they are the Lord's children, and therefore our brothers and sisters: so helping to answer our Lord's prayer

before He comes (and high time, truly), "that they may all be one." It makes us feel as if that happy dawn was again returning, when the Family was of "one heart and soul." Can we continue the quotation? "and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." We at least recognize that we are but stewards for our Master, and we are more or less seeking to advance the common good of the Family. If the Holy Spirit is thus bringing us back to the position of first love, it is significant as showing that He is to-day preparing us for the communism of an eternal Home. It is not to sects but to the one Bride that the Lord says, "Yea: I come quickly." And when we see the prophetic picture at the close of Revelation being fulfilled, we may know of a surety that the Lord is at hand.

Like a life that rallies all its powers ere it passes away, the Church is also returning to something of the fervor of its first proclamation of the gospel throughout all the world, and this within the last few years. Pardon a few personal reminiscences in illustration. There comes before me the first missionary meeting I ever attended — a children's meeting in an upper room in Edinburgh, Scotland. Two elderly ladies, who were organizers and conductors, received what money we had gathered for sending the gospel to the heathen; and I do not remember that they did anything more; except reading us something about missions, and making

an effort to sing a hymn — specially their stock missionary hymn, and the other two that they had, "There is a land of pure delight" and "Here we suffer grief and pain." The Church is poor to-day in missionary hymns, but at that time the leading sects in Scotland looked askance at all hymns, with the exception of the United Presbyterians, who had a large collection, while, strangely, their namesakes in the United States, descended from the same Scotch covenanting stock, refuse all hymns to this day. Scotch sectarianism, in its various "secessions," is a sadly curious study. Each "body" of course claims to be the true representative of the original church of the country. There lived, a number of years ago, in an isolated moorland village in Scotland, an old couple who made the above claim for their two selves. Tourists used to visit them as one of the sights of the district. The old wife would come to the door, and when asked if it was true that she and her husband were all that was left of the genuine church, she would heave a sigh and say: "Aye, sirs, we 're a' that 's left of the guid auld Kirk of Scotland — just me and John." And then she would pause, and add in a confidential tone, "But indeed, sirs, I 'm no' quite sae sure of John." That "church," I understand is now extinct, and I hope that its spirit died with it. I certainly saw, from the English census returns of 1891, that in a certain town in Ireland, the statistics of religious denominations showed 1 of the "Open Brethren"

and 1 of the "Close Brethren" — evidently not brethren dwelling together in unity. But probably they were relatives only in name, so that the Family was not disgraced by them.

This has been a digression, but I was only giving my two dearly-remembered elderly ladies time to start their stock missionary hymn, and it did take them a good while. I do not need to say that it was, "From Greenland's icy mountains," sung by these two with much trembling of voice, and owing to their nervousness, always pitched in an impracticably high key. But, anyway, we children were too timorous to join in; arguing, doubtless, that if our leaders were frightened, how much more ought we to be? Nevertheless, that meeting was a very bold move on the part of these two ladies. For at that time missions had not much prominence, and women workers were but little esteemed in Scotland. I may add that it was not till years afterwards that her churches gave their endorsement to the inspired Word by recognizing the gift of the evangelist, and for a man other than an "ordained" minister to preach the gospel from a pulpit seemed then something like blasphemy. I doubt not but the influence of these pioneer women had something to do with my being, later on, when a youth, a collector for Foreign Missions, making my rounds every three months to receive 3 pence or 4 pence, in a few cases 6 pence, and in one case, of which I was proud, 2 shillings. But 3 pence

and 4 pence, that is, 6 and 8 cents, per quarter of a year, for the telling of the glad tidings of God's love to those millions in darkness, were the general contributions of "church" members, who were probably every day in the year wasting a great deal more on drink and tobacco. When I began, with some inherited timorousness, to argue for increased contributions, I was reproved, on the ground that it would do harm to the collection, made every month, and to which ten gave for my one, for the great scheme of the Free Church of Scotland — the Sustentation (ministers') fund. This is only about 25 years ago, but whereas then I could find no one who seemed to sympathize with my strong leanings towards Foreign Missions, I am conscious that the tide of missionary enthusiasm, even among my own acquaintance, has gone far beyond me. Probably, if the facilities and encouragements of to-day had not been conspicuously absent when I was younger, I would have chosen for my life-work the noblest of all occupations in which man or woman can be engaged. But that probability has with me, but not, I hope, with you, reader, passed into the sad "might have been."

Are you not amazed, Christian reader, at the great bound that this subject of Foreign Missions has taken within the last few years — leaping right into the hearts of so many of the Family, and constraining our brothers and sisters to go, in ever increasing numbers. It seems as if the Church had just awakened to the fact that our Lord really

meant what He said, when He gave the command, "Go ye." Who? Ministers? They evidently do not think so, for they have not gone. Who ministered to Christ? Pre-eminently women: they are the true ministers. And what means does God choose when He wants to "put to shame the things that are strong" and to "bring to nought the things that are"? Scripture tells us that He chooses "the weak things of the world" "and the things that are despised." If missionary "Boards" had been spiritual enough to know the mind of the Lord, we would have seen ere this a grand foreshadowing of the fulfillment of that prophecy which concerns the time when Jerusalem will be the center of the world for missions, as for everything: "The Lord giveth the word: the women that publish the tidings are a great host." (Psalm 68:11. R. V.) But even as it is, woman's part in proclaiming the glad tidings is to-day without a parallel since the days when women were recognized in the Church in the matters of prayer, prophecy, and assembly service, and labored with Paul in the gospel. The day is past when an apology was needed for our sisters. The apology was needed when woman lost us Paradise, but no apology is needed for her endeavor to lead us back thereto by every power and gift bestowed upon her, not less than upon man, by the Holy Spirit. And a Dispensation whose spirit is essentially feminine, is woman's natural sphere of operations. Grace is not the name nor the distinctive characteristic of a man. Sinai is masculine; but

Calvary breathes the feminine attributes of gentleness, meekness, patient endurance, self-sacrifice. And women are the best exponents of these virtues. They are God's reserve forces, whom He is calling up to-day, because the battle has come to a crisis.

Childhood repeats itself in old age, and there is a return at the end of life to first conditions, in a second childhood. This, in a figure, is true of the Church. She is returning to more of that child-likeness of heart of which our Lord speaks: "Verily I say to you, Unless you turn, and become as the little children, you shall never enter into the kingdom of Heaven;" that childlikeness that can kneel with every brother and sister, and say these two wondrous words, "Our Father;" that childlikeness which dwells in the arms of Love, even as the beloved disciple exhorts: "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

THE SPECIAL URGENCY OF THE GOSPEL CALL.

It is just what we would expect of God, that if He was closing on the world the door of free grace, and the hour was about to strike when the "whosoever" would no longer have a Saviour and His salvation for the mere taking — it is just what we would expect of Him, that through the Holy Spirit He would stir up all His servants to proclaim His offer with special urgency. And this is just what we find to be the case. The gospel is being

preached to the unsaved of the churches, and to the unsaved of the highways and hedges, and streets and lanes, with a vigor which is evidently inspired. It is, Come, and Come quickly; "for things are ready" in the Father's house, and we have just time to tell you and go.

The Lord seems overabundantly willing to save any one just now: anxious to give every one a chance ere He shut the door. O matchless grace! that will even go and stand outside the door of His own professed house — apostate Laodicea — and say, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Christ is to-day preaching to the churches, not through their ministers, but through *outside* evangelists, who go all over the 'States, Great Britain, and elsewhere, preaching this last offer of salvation through faith, to congregations of professed believers! This is one of the most extraordinary spectacles that the world ever saw, if people would only take time to think of it, and consider that the last position of Christ in connection with Christendom is being fulfilled before their very eyes. It is also the most sublime exhibition of Grace that was ever seen by fallen man — the closing offer of the day of the dispensation of God's love — Grace in sunset glory, crowned with her own radiance.

It is the same with Foreign as with Home missions. The Lord's servants are beginning to real-

ize that it is not a case of, Who shall go? but of, Who shall stay? or rather, as one said to me lately, Who *dare* stay?

"Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (James 5: 7, 8.) We saw the early rain at Pentecost; to-day we see the latter rain — thousands turning at the last call. As regards wind and weather, the world is wiser to-day than were the Jews of old, but can it any better than they discern the signs of the times? If it could, there would be a commotion.

The special urgency of the Devil and his renewed activity, mostly as a seeming angel of light, are also significant. He knows that his time is now short, and he is working hard. His presentations of the future may be classed under one or other of two soul-destroying delusions — Materialism, for the would-be-philosophic few, and Universalism, for the many. The latter is nothing but a repeat of his old lie in Eden — "You shall not surely die." The most numerous exponents of Universalism are the Spiritualists, who permeate and leaven the churches of these States, and claim 10,000,000 of our population. But I hope that even to-day the estimate of 5,000,000, made some years ago, is nearer the truth.

For further particulars of the activity of the Devil, and the urgency with which men and women are being hurried to Hell, as if there was fear of their arriving there too late — I refer to the daily newspapers of Christendom.

CONVERGING LINES.

If, in traveling by rail, we see on the right hand and on the left, numerous converging lines, we may safely argue that we are rapidly approaching a great terminus. The converging lines of argument to which I have been calling the reader's attention are such as can be seen and understood by the mind that has had no special training. But there are other converging lines, belonging to the domain of science and prophetical exegesis. These, as regards any explaining of them, do not come within my purpose, which has been to advance reasons which were capable of verification by the ordinary reader ; whereas, were I to pass on to arguments, for the appreciating of which some acquaintance with astronomy, chronology, and other studies, would be necessary — the conclusions arrived at could never be so convincing to the average mind, because they would have to be accepted — not participated in. All that I want to draw the reader's attention to, is the very remarkable convergence of such arguments upon the conclusion at which we have already arrived. The shepherds came all together to Bethlehem, like so

many simple arguments for the Coming. A great light from the Lord had shone round about them, and an angel had told them that the Saviour had come, and was that very night close at hand; at which glad news suddenly a multitude of the Heavenly host appeared, and burst forth into a hymn of praise. Afterwards came Science and Learning, wise men of the East whose lines of travel converged on this same long-looked-for Jesus. We may not be able to grapple with the facts that led these wise men to a unanimous conclusion concerning that star, but we can see the argument of their converging lines. Yet I like to think that the simple shepherds got there first, arriving at a conclusion which not wisdom but "the Lord hath made known unto us." The lowly-minded are ever the wisest concerning the coming of the Lord; for love dwells with them, and there is nothing so wise as love.

I sum up much reading of the books of our wise men by saying, that the concensus of opinion as to the imminence of a crisis is wonderful. Interpreters of prophecy, who were once notable for extreme divergence of views, are now very harmonious as to the rapid closing of this Dispensation. Even the most careless might be sobered by the fact that among the most spiritual and intelligent of these interpreters, the amount of their divergence is only from now till 1901, for the shutting of the door of grace. And the conclusions of able Christian Scientists, from data of

very varying character, are harmonious with such a near ending. It is clear from Scripture that it will not be given to the Church, any more than it was to those who were looking for our Lord's first coming, to know more than *about* the time. But *that* we may know. The Lord may now at *any moment* terminate the present condition of things as regards the Church, the Jew, and the world at large.

There have never been wanting individual predictions of a crisis, but this general agreement is very notable. And very notable also is to-day's general expectation throughout the Church, which has had no parallel since the days immediately preceding the first advent. The expectation that existed for some decades after Christ's ascension affords no parallel, for it was an expectation of decline — fading with first love. But the expectation of to-day is one of increase, which has grown, within the memories of those now living, from a revived Hope, Faith, and Love, shared by only a few, to what is now a world-wide and ever-increasing looking for the coming One. We have, as at the first advent, those who specially watch — the religious seers, like Anna and Simeon ; and the religious scientists, like the Magi. And even as there was then over the whole empire of Rome the expectation of the advent of a Mighty One, so to-day even the godless nations who dwell above the ruins of that empire, are looking for a crisis and a "coming man." Many heathen nations also

believe that a Messiah of some kind is now about to appear.

A spirit of unrest is everywhere, suggestive of a coming chaos, out of which a new creation will be evolved. The sensitiveness of the public mind betrays itself every now and then in some sudden terror. Even nature seems to be becoming increasingly restless — pointing to the approach of the time when visible signs, — great earthquakes, famines and pestilences, a darkened sun and moon, and falling stars — will proclaim to Israel the coming of the Son of man, "with power and great glory."

It is suggestive that a tradition among some of the most ancient races, and which has evidently come down from a remote age, assigns to the world a duration of 7000 years — a week of millenniums. When Scripture speaks of the world, it means the inhabited earth. A mere globe of matter is not the world, any more than four walls and a roof is home. So it is outside the question how old the actual matter is, of which the earth is composed. It concerns us only that as the home of our race this world has existed about 6000 years; and I think it very probable that the termination of these 6000 years (which, of course, will be after the Church is removed), will be within a few years — one plausible calculation of a scientific man fixing their close at 1898 to 1899. The seventh 1000 years is the Millennial Sabbath. The Church, which is reckoned as a Heavenly people, works *from* rest, already entered upon: and of

this our Lord's day, on the first day of the week, is a type. But the world is working *toward* rest: and of this the Sabbath of the Jew (an earthly people) is a type, being placed at the end of the week, like the world's millennial Sabbath. When that glorious day of 1000 years of rest shall dawn on the world, her millions, worn out and exhausted with the wars and burdens of the time of tribulation, will look to King Jesus, and see a fullness of meaning in His sweet words: "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

So strangely does the mystic number seven enter into the workings of God, that if I were asked how long the world would last, I would feel very safe in saying this much, that its duration would be a matter of sevens; and that very probably it would be a week of the days of its Creator, with whom "one day is as a thousand years."

I need not say to any person of intelligence that there can be no millennial Sabbath in such a world as this, without the Lord's direct intervention; and there comes before that the Day of the Lord, that "burneth as a furnace;" and before that again, the Lord Jesus will appear in the air and and say to His waiting people, "Come." The theory that some people hold, that this world is being Christianized and civilized up to a millennium, is so untenable, that I avoid making reflections on their intelligence by presuming that they have only given a superficial consideration to the

subject. Christianity is at most but a light in a world's darkness ; and the civilization of unregenerate human nature is but the varnish over the dry rot, the whitewash upon the sepulchre. An educated devil is a devil still, and all the more harmful for his education. Human nature is the very same to-day as when Cain slew his brother. It will be when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth that the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness, but the universal new heart will not probably be till the time of the new heaven and the new earth. As this is my last reference to the Millennium, let me here say that what follows it is foretold in the book of the Revelation from Chapter 20, verse 7, to the end of the book, in Chapter 22 — God's last word for us, and His best. The language is plain ; the meaning unmistakable. And though you, reader, may have read this wonderful passage ten thousand times it will refresh you to read it again. "Blessed is he who reads, and they who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein : for the time is at hand." Meantime, it is only the world's Saturday night, with its sin and folly, varnished or unvarnished. But the hour is late. How late ?

The Magi had no written word to guide them — only a star. And were we wise enough to read the movements of God's great timepiece of the heavens, without doubt we would find that some vast circuit is again all but completed, and that we might even now see His star at its rising. But to

us belongs the greater glory of the spiritual. It is no material star seen by material eyes, but the Star of Love seen by the eyes of Faith — even as it is written, "Until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." If thus we can now say with the Magi that we have seen His rising star, the hour is at hand when, like them, we shall add, at our beholding of His face, "and are come to worship Him." Meantime the lines keep converging, and we are rapidly nearing the end of our journey. How near may we be?.

We say often to one another, when making calculations for the carrying out of our day's engagements, "Can you tell me the exact time?" How solemnizing is the question as concerns the coming of our Lord, so that we may, in the remaining hours of our tarrying here, the more effectively and fully fulfill our duties, and "be found in peace, without spot, and blameless in His sight." With what intensified force, at this late hour, come the words of Paul: "Now it is high time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." I sat down to the writing of these pages, already convinced that it was but a little while; but after being thus face to face with these reasons, thinking them out with much hindrance from the Devil as well as gratefully-acknowedged help from above, I feel that we cannot now be sure even of a moment. On the eve of an Exodus more thrilling and sublime than

that of Israel, when the depths of the ocean and the graves of the earth shall give up the dead in Christ, and there will join them the living saints — the laborer from the field, and the clerk from his desk ; the pale-faced woman from her sewing, and the nurse from the bed of pain ; the one that was kneeling in prayer, and that choir of praising ones ; the soundly sleeping, and those sleepless through suffering, and those that were about to die ; treasures of love and excellency, all gathered together ; changed in a moment, by beholding, into the very likeness and beauty of the Lord ; taken right up through the divided air to the other side, to homes of joy everlasting, — on such an eve, in the solemn shadows of our last hours in this old world that has been to us God's school-house and labor-field, we want to look at one another, and at God's work in us and through us, as we will do when we get home.

"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." But is it not a very strange love that will not sit down at the same table with the rest of the Family? Our Lord prays that we may be one that the world may "know" and "believe." Then our unity must be manifested. A theoretical unity may satisfy the theologian, but it will not meet the requirements of the very practical kingdom of God. The world smiles at the theory: the Church sighs for the reality. When the "might have been" is forever

past as regards this world, will not some of the tears that the tender hand of Jesus will wipe away, be shed because of backward looks upon our own lovelessness? We come together in occasional conferences, and say, "How good and how pleasant it is!" And now and then we have the memorial supper of our Lord at the close of a conference; and we say, How sweet it is to remember together our Saviour! But is not this what the Lord meant us to do "often," and not at rare intervals? Is there any reason why you and I should not sit down, like the early Christians, every week at the Family table? Is there not rather every reason in favor that love and obedience can dictate? Must we wait till the walls of the Father's house enclose us, ere we break down these walls of the Devil that now separate the Family? In sitting together with the unconverted at the Lord's table, we are guilty, unless God helps, of their eternal misleading; in having these sectarian Lord's tables we are guilty of casting a stumbling-block before the world; and we know well what a weakening of soul and spirit, and body too, it is to have the Lord's enemies fraternize with us at His table, and to be separated from our own brothers and sisters by walls whose builder's name the world knows as well as we do. Once, the Devil scattered the flock as a wolf; now, as an angel of light, he persuades the silly sheep that they are doing God service in being very jealous of his honor in some particular of

fancied orthodoxy, religious or ecclesiastical. But the only qualification for the Lord's table, that gathering place for every brother and sister, is Love, and not a supposed orthodoxy. Love alone can remember the Lord: Love alone is orthodox.

Why should there not be, in every city, and wherever else practicable, a central meeting place for the Family, where the communion of the Lord's Supper, whose duration of observance is "Till He come," could be a weekly joy and refreshment? And why is it that the Church has departed from the original observance of the Lord's day from evening to evening, beginning on Saturday evening which was the rule for 700 years after Christ? We have neither Scripture nor convenience on our side — only heathen Rome, from whom we get our present reckoning, even as we got the names for the days of the week from the gods that our Saxon forefathers worshiped. And why again have we departed from the original evening communion? John tells us "it was night" when the first supper was held; and Acts 20 : 7 and 8, shows us the Church gathered together to break bread in an upper room, with many lights burning, and Paul speaking on till midnight. And yet we accept a morning "supper"! Surely this is as absurd and unscriptural as it could be. If Christians would only search their New Testaments, instead of going by ecclesiastical use and wont, it would be better for us all.

Let the Church then be stirred up everywhere to have gatherings every Saturday night. What a beautiful appropriateness — "many lights" burning, like the wise virgins' lamps in the darkness, the Family table spread, and the midnight hour approaching. Sweet indeed would it be if at such a gathering, as the bread was being broken or as the cup was circling round, the Lord Himself should suddenly appear, and we be caught up to meet Him in the air. Truly blessed would we be if thus found together, who are to be together with one another, as with Him we love, for ever and for ever.

A number of years ago, when living in Scotland, I invited to a Christmas Eve meeting, on the subject of the Second Coming, over 300 Christians, known to me or vouched for by friends, and representing eight denominations. I announced, in my circular letter, that they would have, toward the close of the meeting, an opportunity which probably they never would have again, of unitedly remembering the Lord in the Family supper. A most enjoyable and profitable gathering it was. Of the only two or three who did not avail themselves of this novel opportunity, there was one, belonging to rather an exclusive sect, who wrote me, as his reason for non-attendance, that he did not see why, if these Christians could meet once, they could not meet always. Although his excuse was poor, his "why" was unanswerable. Why, indeed ?

Would it be too much, not only to have gathering places where Christians from all the sects could meet once a week on the common ground that is round their Lord's table, but, wherever there was a sufficient population, to have the gathering place open day and night till the Lord comes? Would it be too much to have continuous praise, advent hymns and songs of the gospel, with reading of the word of God, specially as in the New Testament, and prayers for the Coming again, and intercessions for all who had need? What a joy and refreshment would such a meeting be, and what a testimony to the world! But would there be lovers of the Lord enthusiastic enough in their love to carry it on? What! Are we less enthusiastic than the singers under Judaism, who praised God in consecutive choirs day and night in the Temple? Are we less enthusiastic, for what we believe to be only a little while, than the servants of the Devil, who day and night, serve him? I know of one of his saloon temples, whose doors have not been closed for thirty years — worshipers going in and out continually, and contributing with a liberality of which the churches know nothing.

Such high privileges may be enjoyed by us, the often disobedient followers of the Lord. But obedient ones, who have gone for Him into Heathendom, with their well-nigh solitary lamps, can only, unless in rare cases, look on from a distance. Therefore it surely becomes us that, in a very

special degree, these noble spiritual kinsfolk of ours should have the strengthening and encouragement of our sympathy, expressed by deeds and constant intercessions. Our every furtherance of Foreign Missions helps to complete the testimony to all nations, and is therefore a furtherance of the coming of our Lord. He never promised the conversion of the world to His messengers. That reward is for Himself, in the day when it will be, not Jesus seeking the world, but the world seeking Jesus; when "all nations shall flow" "to the house of the God of Jacob;" when "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Our part is but the obedience that sows the seed. The harvest-home is not now. One Dispensation sows, and another shall reap. But to-day's glorious testimony must be, like the testimony of a united gathering, now, or never to all eternity.

What will it be to look back from the end of the journey and the end of all opportunity, on a barren "might have been;" on a life of ease, where love and obedience called for Christ-like self-denial; on foolish sowing of the seed on the gospel-hardened downward ways of Christendom, instead of wise scattering on those wide fields of Heathendom, where there were at least probabilities of fruit-bearing! What will it be to have no spiritual children to call us blessed; to have no "crown of rejoicing" before our Lord Jesus at

His coming; to hear no "Well done, good and faithful servant," come from His lips!

> "Ah! who shall thus the Master meet,
> Bearing but withered leaves?
> Ah! who shall at the Saviour's feet,
> Before the solemn judgment-seat
> Lay down, for golden sheaves,
> Nothing but leaves! Nothing but leaves!"

There was a gathering of dark-skinned children in a mission house, to commemorate its opening a year before. The little ones, in their brightly-colored dresses, sang gospel hymns that their teachers had worked hard to learn them; and the mothers looked on, smiling with delight. But among them sat a sad-faced woman, with the tears running down her cheeks. At the close of the meeting, the teachers came to her, to know the cause of her sorrow. "Oh, why did you not come sooner," she said, "that my little boy might have been here?" And then she went on to tell how she had once a beautiful child, and that on the occasion of a heathen festival, finding him a source of constant trouble, she had retired to a thicket and broken the back of the little one over her knee — throwing away the body to be devoured by the dogs. As she finished her awful confession, she burst into frantic screams of despair: "Oh, why did you not come sooner, that my little boy might have been alive, that he might have been here with these children?"

Why, reader? Why, myself? And our Master asks us, Why? That darkened mind, with its

hard heart, was not so guilty as these enlightened minds, and these hearts that profess to have somewhat of the love of God, but whose cold indifference made that crime and that sorrow possible. We dream over Foreign Missions. The awful necessities of the heathen have never yet taken possession of our souls. And they never will, till in obedience we come in personal contact with the work, no longer looking at it from afar, and perhaps remembering to thank God who made us to differ, as we read a story like this, or give a silver coin where Christ gave Himself. Where would the Mother country have been but for Foreign Missions? It is not so very far back when our forefathers worshiped idols. The fires of the great god Baal (the Bel of Babylon) still linger in some far parts of Scotland and Ireland, under the name of Beltane fires, lighted every 1st of May; and even the going through the fire is kept up. And in England the stones are yet standing of the temples of the Druids, silent reminders of the times when they worshiped the Serpent and other gods, and burnt alive in wickerwork frames even little children for sacrifices. Thank God that so long ago Christians had compassion on our forefathers, so that we had not to wait in darkness till the modern servants of the Saviour found time, and mustered love enough, to bring us the light.

God grant to thee, reader, and to me, that with the zeal of those who know that every day is increasingly likely to be our last for service here,

we may have no wish but to know His will and do it. It is a great matter to be saved from Hell: it is a greater matter to be saved from self, from a fruitless, self-seeking life. "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."

"Keep my life, declared to be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Keep my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

"Keep my hands, that they may move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Keep my feet, that they may be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

"Keep my voice, that I may sing
Always, only, for my King.
Keep my lips, that they may be
Filled with messages from Thee.

"Keep my silver and my gold:
Ev'ry mite for Thee I hold.
Keep my intellect, and use
Ev'ry power as Thou shalt choose.

"Keep my will, for it is Thine;
It is now no longer mine.
Keep my heart — it is Thine own;
It is now Thy royal throne.

"Keep my love: my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store.
Keep myself, that I may be
Ever, only, all for Thee."

Lord Jesus, let the lamps Thou hast given us to carry for Thee in the darkness be ever trimmed and burning; and may these spirits, and souls, and bodies, which are Thine, be preserved entire, without blame at Thy coming. And now, Lord, hasten Thine appearing and the gathering of Thy children. Thine own call for Thee. We love Thee, and we long to see Thee. And Thou hast said, "Yea: I come quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

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